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Photograph by NOLIS ANDERSON

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PHOTOGRAPHY: (COVER PHOTO OF GAGA SLONINA) CHICAGO FIRE FC; (SAM PIRRUCCELLO) ROSS FEIGHERY; (CORKSCREW) ALESSI; (FOOD) JEFF MARINI

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MAY ISSUE

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

This May, the **Women of Influence special section** will celebrate the contributions and successes of women in the Chicagoland area who have made a significant impact in their professions. Whether an entrepreneur, small business owner, or philanthropist, this special section will offer female leaders a platform to connect themselves and their business to our 501,900+ readers.

SPACE RESERVATION: MARCH 20 — MATERIAL DEADLINE: MARCH 22

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FROM THE EDITOR

Nexts of the Past

AS WE WERE PUTTING TOGETHER THE “WHO’S GOT NEXT?” cover story (page 42), I got curious: What’s happened to those we pegged as rising stars in the two past installments of this series? Let me bring you up to speed on a few.

When we introduced you to Max Christie in 2019, he was a sophomore basketball star at Rolling Meadows High School. Now? You can see him playing alongside LeBron James as a Los Angeles Lakers rookie, logging double-digit minutes. He even cracked the starting lineup twice in January.

Also cited in 2019 was Naomi Beckwith, then a senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Two years later, the Guggenheim Museum in New York City scooped her up as its deputy director and chief curator. Her last gift to Chicago: *Forothermore,* the unforgettable Nick Cave show.

Joe Freshgoods was gaining traction as a streetwear designer when we spotlighted him in 2017. Since then, he has become a fashion icon. His Black culture-steeped shoe collaborations with New Balance have helped fuel the brand’s surge. He’s also produced hits for Converse and Vans.

There have been misses, too, of course. Who could have predicted that after his breakout rookie season with the Bears, running back Jordan Howard, one of our 2017 picks, would slide into NFL oblivion? (Last sighting: He was cut from the New Orleans Saints’ practice squad in November.)

Here’s hoping that the best is still ahead for the class of 2023.

Terrance Noland
Editor in Chief

INSIDE PEEK

Sciortino photographing Kia Smith

Calling the Shots

IT CAN BE CHALLENGING ENOUGH TO nail a cover portrait of *one* person. Try nine. That’s what design director David Syrek and photo director Michael Zajakowski faced after deciding to photograph our rising stars individually (or, in one case, as a couple) for this month’s cover. “Shooting a group of people can be tricky, because you want the photo to bring out each person’s personality, not become one collective,” Syrek explains. Clayton Hauck and Nolis Anderson were busy photographing the subjects for the inside pages, so a third photographer, Jeff Sciortino, was brought in to shoot the cover. At his studio, he took full-body pictures, each under the same lighting and at the same angle. Despite having to schedule a whole new set of shoots, Syrek and Zajakowski got the cover image they wanted. Well, eight of them. –KATE DUBY

NOT YOUR AVERAGE JOE

When contributing editor Edward Robert McClelland stumbled upon the story of Joseph Stancak and the unclaimed fortune he left behind (“The Mystery Millionaire of Gage Park,” page 56), he was busy finishing a book—but he couldn’t resist investigating. “It seemed like such a mystery,” he says. To get to the bottom of it, McClelland made a trip to Stancak’s old neighborhood and knocked on doors, searching for anyone who might remember him. “Quite a few did, and quite a few had stories.” –K.D.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (NOLAND) MICHAEL ZAJAKOWSKI; (SCIORTINO) MILA UGRYN

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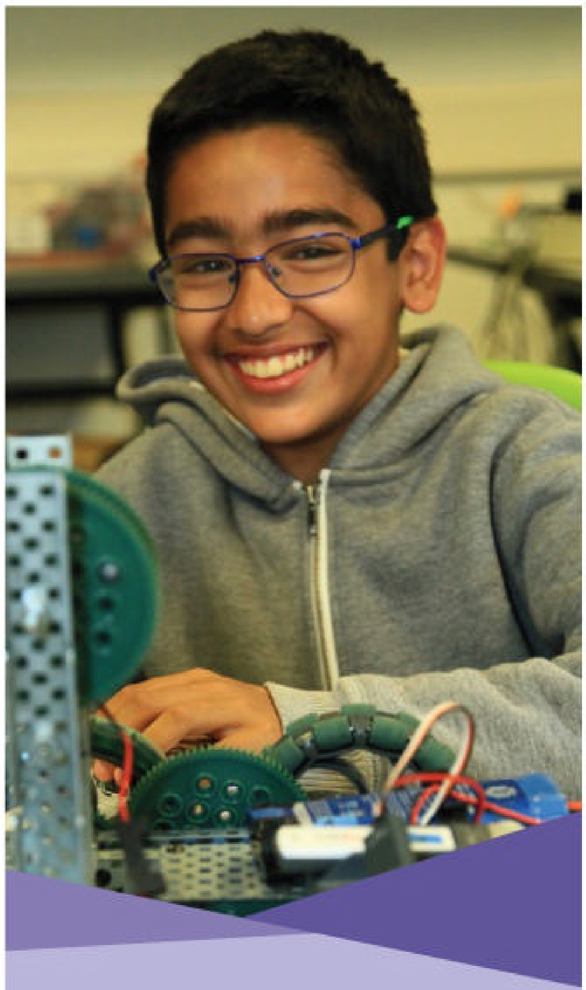

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TALK TO US

The Violin Doctor
TABLE
All Hail the Party Cut

What a fascinating read, and what an amazing craftsman!
@danita.browne ***via Instagram***

Beautiful Music

Amazing article about the world's greatest violin technician, working out of Chicago's Fine Arts Building, our last with an elevator operator ["The Violin Doctor," January]. Thrumming with civic pride.
@rickperlstein ***via Twitter***

An absolutely wonderful piece of literary music by [Elly Fishman]. Stunning.
@JenniferBillock ***via Twitter***

PIZZA PARTY
Tavern style is our true competitor to the New York slice ["All Hail the Party Cut," January]. And it goes toe to toe all day, every day.
@hago25 ***via Instagram***

Uh, where you been? Deep dish is tourist pizza. Tavern-cut thin crust is why we rule in pizza!
@dj_voyr ***via Twitter***

Thank you for recognizing that Chicago is known for more than just its deep-dish variety.
@webercomm ***via Twitter***

Resurgence? I'm confused. It's the only kind of pizza you can find on the South Side.
@historic_homes_of_beverly ***via Instagram***

STREET ARTS
What a treasure ["The Lost Photos of Jay King," January]. These are really amazing moments captured in time.
Mary Pergander ***via Facebook***

Incredible photos of every-day life in Chicago through the decades.
@AlissaKrinsky ***via Twitter***

It would be fun to see where some of these people are now. Especially the kids and babies in the pictures of the '70s.
Kris Cohen ***via Facebook***

ROAD TO THE ELECTION
Where are Juan Pablo Prieto and Warren Williams in your coverage of the 30th Ward ["City Council Races to Watch," February]? Why are you only reporting on machine-backed candidates and not the two progressive candidates?
@dah_veed ***via Twitter***

Wow. No love for the 45th Ward?
@d_arthur_lynn_photos ***via Instagram***

WHERE TO FIND US

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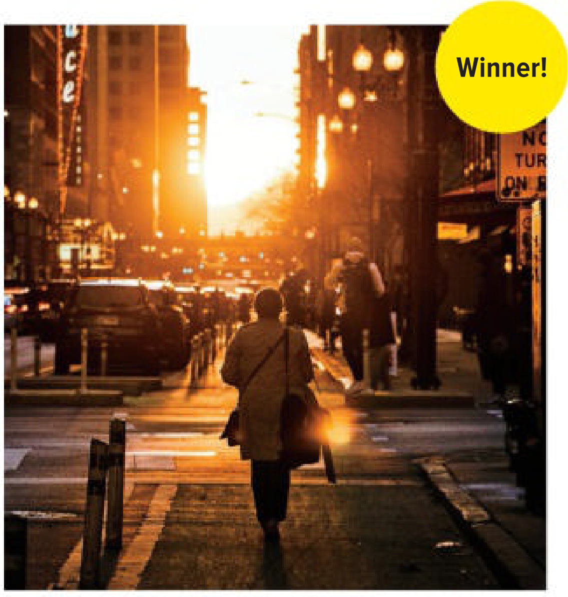
PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL ZAJAKOWSKI

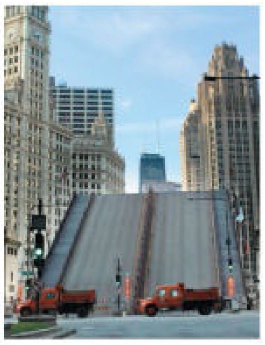
INSTAGRAM CONTEST

Your Best City Street Photos



@karlsolano
The golden hour of the day. Autumnal equinox. A pedestrian walking into the frame. All those factors lined up perfectly for this shot taken by freelance photographer and designer Karl Solano. "The light dramatizes the image, especially during that time," says the Albany Park resident, who captured the scene at the intersection of Randolph and La Salle Streets last fall with his Sony Alpha 7 III. Music from his headphones frequently dictates the mood Solano seeks, and since he often uses city streets as subjects, Chicago's dynamic diversity means he never runs low on inspiration. "It's a very abstract and profound canvas. You're given what the day brings you, and that's what makes it so exciting." – NATHAN ANSELL

WE ALSO LOVED ...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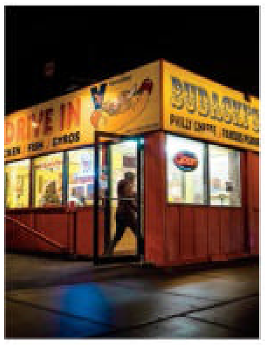
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PHOTOGRAPHY: *(TOP)* KARL SOLANO; *(BOTTOM LEFT)*: DEWITT QUAYIM MCNEIL; *(BOTTOM RIGHT)*: SEAN THORNTON

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Talking Points

This month's conversation starters

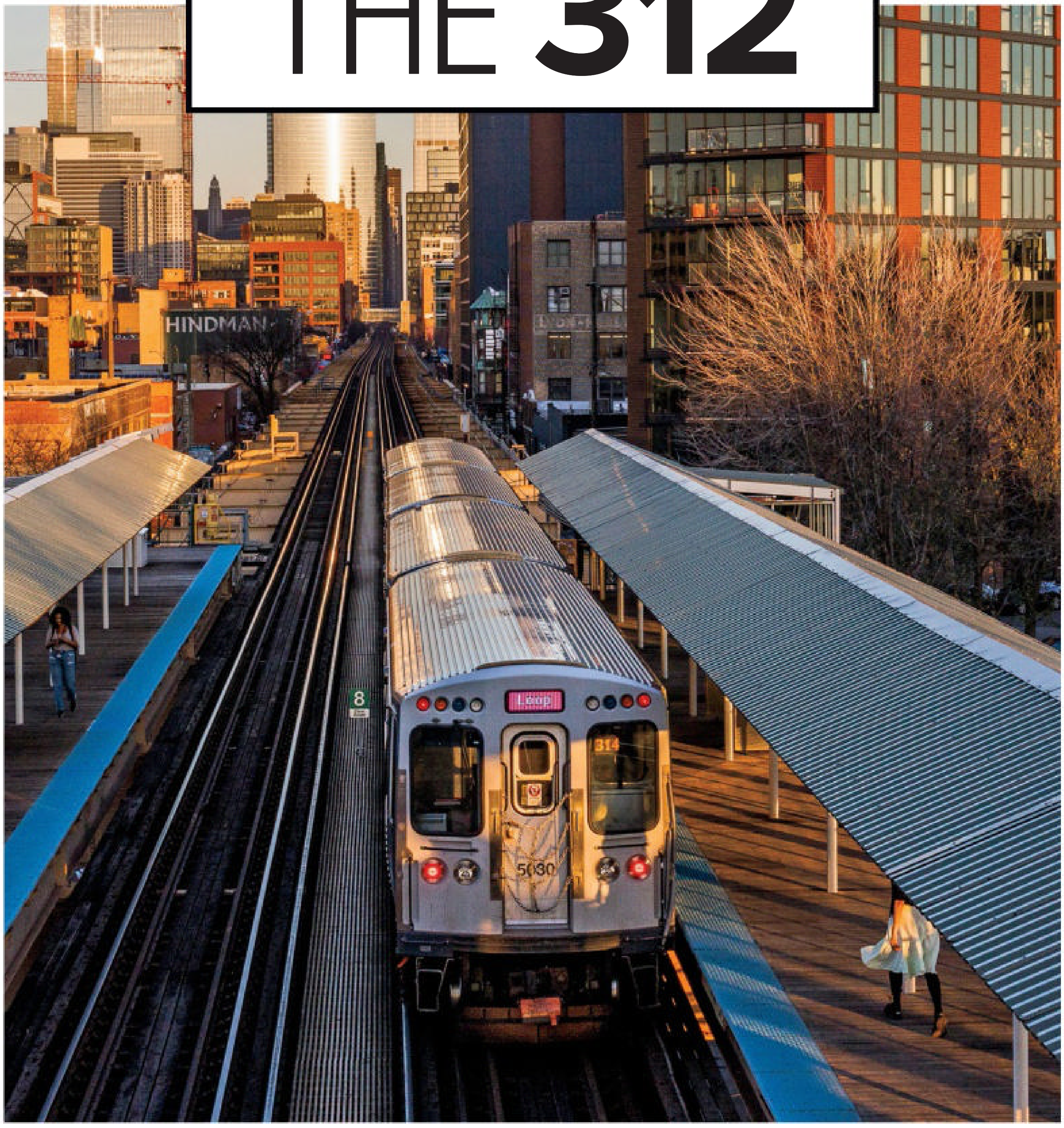
1 Chicago's **top federal prosecutor**, John Lausch, a Trump appointee who indicted Alderman Ed Burke and former House speaker Michael Madigan, will leave office by early March, allowing President Biden to name his own corruption buster.

2 **The trial of Michael McClain**, a confidant of Madigan's charged with soliciting bribes and favors from ComEd, begins March 6—a preview of Madigan's AT&T trial next year.

3 Rachel Jamison Webster, an ostensibly white Northwestern professor, learned she's a **descendant of the Black surveyor** who laid out Washington, D.C. She explores her family history in *Benjamin Banneker and Us,* out March 21.

4 **Opening day at Wrigley Field** is March 30. Odds are 80 to 1 on the revamped Cubs winning the World Series. Never too early to say "Wait till next year."

PHOTOGRAPHY: (CTA) ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*; (McCLAIN) E. JASON WAMBSGANS/*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*



How to Save the L

Riders have been abandoning it due to safety and reliability concerns. What can be done to fix this civic treasure?

By JOHN GREENFIELD

LAST APRIL, *CHICAGO TRIBUNE* CARTOONIST SCOTT STANTIS DREW AN L SYSTEM map with stations named "Mugged," "Knifed," "Trash," and "Urine." Harsh, but he had a point: The pandemic has left Chicago's trademark transit feature less reliable, safe, and sanitary, causing even loyal users to shun it. Even as people return to their normal routines, L use is only half of what it was three years ago.

Fueling the unreliability is a shortage of drivers. The Chicago Transit Authority adjusted its train schedules last fall to better align with available labor, but many runs are still getting skipped. Every day, the local rider advocacy group Commuters Take Action tweets the percentage of fulfilled Blue Line runs; in late December, it was hovering around 66 percent.

And no one wants to be hanging out on L platforms waiting for a train any longer than necessary. Fewer eyes in cars and stations has contributed to a lawless feel, so the pandemic saw a spike in robberies and assaults. Even now, a *Tribune* analysis found the violent crime rate on the L is more than twice what it was before COVID.

Anecdotally, conditions on the trains have become unpleasant and unsanitary, especially on the 24-hour Red and Blue Lines, which unhoused people are increasingly turning to for shelter. It's not unusual these days to see more than one person in a car stretched out across multiple seats, sleeping. Meanwhile, other riders are using the L as a rowdy party spot. Smoking, though not permitted, is nearly ubiquitous on the Red Line at night. Littering seems to have gotten worse, and elevators and platform warming shelters are often used as toilets.

A degraded L system translates into more auto traffic congestion and pollution. It also means a less equitable city, since lower-income residents are more likely to depend on public transit. Moreover, the L is a crucial part of our city's identity – a rare place where a cross section of diverse Chicagoans are brought together. So what can be done?

GET THE CTA WORKFORCE BACK TO FULL STRENGTH

The agency has been addressing this. It held more than a dozen job fairs last year, hiring about 70 train and 420 bus drivers. In November, it increased starting hourly rates for drivers from $24 to more than $28, with another bump this year that will take that to just under $30. This year, mechanics and rail repairers will see their starting wages rise, too, to nearly $40 an hour. The CTA also added hiring and retention bonuses. Still, at the start of the year there were about 100 vacant jobs in rail operations and 600 in bus operations, according to a CTA spokesperson.

The agency needs to do even more, says Ted Villaire, communications director for the Active Transportation Alliance, a local advocacy group for public transit, walking, and biking. "CTA employees deserve compensation that keeps up with rising living costs, and they need more flexible schedules," he says. Otherwise, they will look elsewhere for work, "such as driving for trucking and delivery companies."

Fabio Göttlicher, cofounder of Commuters Take Action, says it's clear from his conversations with CTA employees and managers that the agency needs to streamline its hiring and promotion practices. He noted that new hires have to work relatively low-paying jobs in customer service or as flaggers before getting bumped up to drivers. "It's no surprise that the hiring funnel is still dry. If no changes are made, more and more current operators are going to quit because they are overworked. It could become a death spiral."

> **"If no changes are made, more and more current operators are going to quit because they are overworked. It could become a death spiral."**
>
> *—Fabio Göttlicher, cofounder of Commuters Take Action*

TAP ALTERNATIVE TACTICS FOR CRIME REDUCTION

Last year, the city responded to transit crime by increasing police presence. Of course, that comes with its own baggage. No one wants a repeat of the incident three years ago in which police officers, after struggling to detain a man for walking between cars, shot him as he fled up an escalator of the busy Grand Red Line station, seriously injuring him.

Meanwhile, the CTA has beefed up its unarmed security force. Last spring, it signed a three-year, $71 million deal to double that force, to more than 200. But these young, yellow-vested guards often travel inefficiently in packs. Security camera footage tweeted last March showed a group of them running away from a fight. "We're unsafe on the trains because we're just kid guards," one told Block Club Chicago. Last summer, the CTA spent another $31 million for up to 50 K-9 teams, each consisting of two unarmed guards and a German shepherd. According to a K-9 team member, dogs can only be unleashed if a guard's life is in danger.

A better solution for crime prevention: something along the lines of the "transit ambassadors" deployed by the Bay Area Rapid Transit system. Run by the transit police, the program trains unarmed outreach workers in de-escalation and antibias techniques meant to reduce conflicts. According to the *San Francisco Examiner*, ambassadors are effective at helping people in crisis, and rarely resort to calling in armed help. The public transit agencies in Los Angeles and Boston have similar initiatives. The Active Transportation Alliance and the local disability rights group Access Living have both endorsed this idea.

FIND OTHER SHELTER OPTIONS FOR UNHOUSED PEOPLE

40th Ward Alderman Andre Vasquez, an outspoken transit advocate, says that "resources to address homelessness, those who suffer from mental health challenges, and those with substance use disorders" should be an integral part of the strategy to improve train conditions.

The CTA's 2023 budget includes $2 million for nonprofits such as the Night Ministry to connect people sheltering on trains with services. And Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced a $3 million tiny homes pilot to take people off the street. The most effective thing she could do is back the proposed Bring Chicago Home Ordinance, to raise the real estate transfer tax on properties sold for $1 million or more. Those funds would go toward affordable housing and support services. She's currently blocking the ordinance.

Labor problems, crime, and homelessness aren't just big challenges for the CTA. They're issues across the city. If we can get the trains back on track, it will be a sign that Chicago is moving in the right direction. **C**

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THE TWO-MINUTE GUIDE

The History of Chicago's Irish Catholics

How one little island in the North Atlantic came to play such a big role in a Midwestern city's culture

By GRACE PERRY

SPECIAL-EDITION EMERALD BLACKHAWKS jerseys. Adult men cosplaying as leprechauns. Sticky-floored pubs at 9 a.m. It's St. Patrick's Day – like it or not, Chicago's best excuse for a party. And just another sign of the outsize Irish Catholic influence on this city. How'd we get here? Let's review.

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Mayor Richard M. Daley at the 2006 South Side Irish Parade; O'Leary's Saloon in Canaryville, the city's Irish hub, in 1906

EARLY DAYS

You've heard of the Irish Potato Famine of the mid-1800s? To recap: Blighted crops drove more than a million folks out of Ireland, many to America for new opportunities. Irish laborers are credited with transforming Chicago from a rinky-dink prairie town to a thriving metropolis. Specifically, they helped dig the Illinois and Michigan Canal, connecting Lake Michigan to the Mississippi, and worked the railroads, steel mills, and stockyards. The canal project led many Irish folks to settle in Bridgeport, the eventual home turf of the Daley dynasty. In other words, the Irish went from digging ditches to ghost payrolling in just a century.

POLITICAL RISE

While othered in the mid-19th century (the *Chicago Tribune* blamed immigrants for the city's crime and poverty—thank goodness that rhetoric stayed in the 1800s!), the Irish speedily rose above their station. According to Sean Farrell, coauthor of *The Irish in Illinois*, they had three advantages over other newcomers. First, they worked way harder than—Ope, misread my notes, scratch that! First, they were white. Second, they spoke English, allowing them to plug into political goings-on and land jobs in the police and fire departments. Which brings us to No. 3: They came to America with a background in representative democracy and an understanding of bloc voting and coalition building. John Hopkins, elected in 1893, was the first of nine Irish Catholic mayors, with the Irish-led Democratic machine reaching its peak (?) under Richard J. Daley. The 10th will be Bill Murray.

PARISHES AND EDUCATION

The Irish Catholics created churches based on territory, not nationality. From Bridgeport to Rogers Park, each parish served as a foothold: a community center, with clergy acting as spiritual guides, teachers, and social workers. Initially working as domestics, Irish American women played a huge role in education, staffing parish, public, and nursing schools. My father especially would like you to know that Chicago's two major Catholic universities—Loyola and DePaul—stem from neighborhood parishes.

PUBS

Irish taverns cropped up around the canal, steel mills, and stockyards as places for men (and the occasional woman, through the back door and, per my Irish Chicago lesbian fan fiction, sporting pantaloons and an impish grin) to socialize and organize. Today, you can barely walk a block from Edison Park to Mount Greenwood without passing an Irish pub of questionable authenticity. *Sláinte.* ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: (BAGPIPER) NANCY STONE/*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*; (DALEY) TIM BOYLE/ GETTY IMAGES; (PUB) CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM/GETTY IMAGES

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VOX

Friend Zone

In her memoir *B.F.F.*, Hyde Park author Christie Tate tackles female relationships.

Interview by KIM BROOKS

Q: When you get married and have kids, it's so easy to let the world beyond the nuclear family contract. Can you talk about the ebb and flow of your feelings about maintaining female friendships?

A: For so much of my 20s and 30s, I was laser focused on finding a romantic partner. I stopped having as much time for friends. Then I got married, but all my friends were having babies, so I still felt apart. The day after my wedding, I told my husband, "It can't just be me and you. I need all the windows open. I need circulation." I always had this need for close friends – intimates where sex is off the table but I'm borrowing your sweater, I'm going to drink out of your drink, you can stop by with no formality. But it was through one particular friendship that I began to feel entitled to friendship.

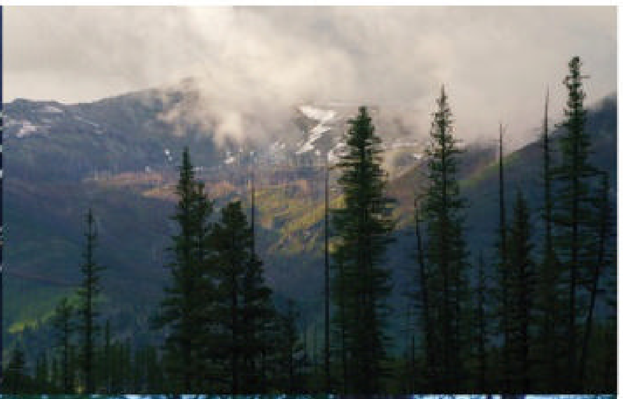
Q: And how did that friendship become the focus of your book?

A: I started the book in 2019, and it took a long time to find the heart of it. At first I thought I wanted to write about how my jealousy and insecurity with other women got in the way of friendships. This plagued me my whole life. In my late 30s, I began to see how my problems in friendship were causing me as much pain as my problems with other kinds of relationships. I started talking about it with this woman I'd met through an Al-Anon meeting. It turned out she'd struggled with similar problems around female friendship. So the two of us decided to embark on this betterment project together. It's a story about getting well around friendship, of how the two of us set out in a deliberate way to work at becoming better friends to each other. Along the way, I learned a lot about her, but also about friendship in general and how much I needed it in my life.

Q: Books on women's relationships get put into the category of chick lit. They aren't taken seriously, whereas books about submarines or conspiracy theories supposedly contain a universal truth. Did you feel any of these contradictions or pressures as you were writing?

A: The one thing I knew was that this was going to be a book for and about women. I'm not *not* writing for men, but I'm not worrying about it. If that limits it, I don't really give a shit. ■

Photograph by MICHAEL ZAJAKOWSKI



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New Zealand's Tongariro National Park

TRAVEL

Spring Flings

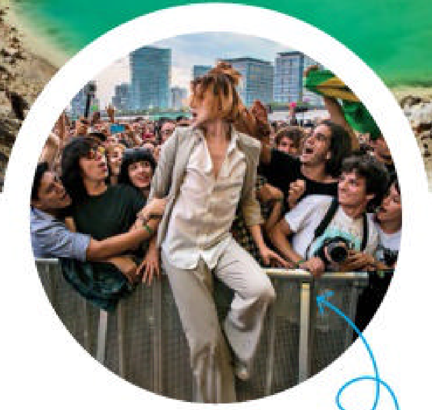
Getting to these coveted destinations will be easier this season, thanks to new direct service from O'Hare.

By NINA KOKOTAS HAHN

NEW ZEALAND

Put on pause during the pandemic after a brief run, Air New Zealand's 16-hour flight to Auckland—the only nonstop service from Chicago to New Zealand—is back, on offer three times a week (Wednesday, Friday, Sunday) on a slick Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner (from $1,693). Want to spread out? Try a roomy three-seat Skycouch (from $4,272).

Why go this spring March marks the start of fall in New Zealand, and on the subtropical North Island you'll find thinning summer crowds, abundant sunshine, and highs in the mid- to upper 60s through May. It's the ideal time to experience quintessential Kiwi outdoor adventures like hiking amid volcanoes in UNESCO-designated Tongariro National Park or kayaking the stunning Whanganui River in lush Whanganui National Park. Up for a swim? Snorkel through Rikoriko Cave, one of the world's largest sea caves, 14 miles off the pristine Tutukaka Coast.



BARCELONA, SPAIN

United's eight-and-a-half-hour nonstop (from $1,512) debuts May 25, giving travelers a second daily direct option. This one leaves O'Hare at 9:25 p.m. (American's departs at 5:45 p.m.)

Why go this spring Come for temperatures in the mid-70s and stay for the city's famous jamborees, from the massive Primavera Sound festival (pictured; May 29 to June 4) to the Feast of Sant Joan (June 23 to 24), where locals stoke lively *fogueres* (bonfires) to welcome the arrival of summer. A two-hour train ride south along the coast gets you to Priorat, Catalonia's intimate and mountainous wine country, where you can stay at the 24-suite Gran Hotel Mas d'en Bruno (from $380 a night), a luxury property opening in May.

IRELAND'S WEST COAST

In recent years, if you wanted to get from Chicago to this stunning part of the Emerald Isle, you had to fly through Dublin, on the east coast, or connect elsewhere. But beginning May 25, United will offer daily seven-hour direct service (from $939) to Shannon, making destinations like Galway and Limerick more accessible than ever.

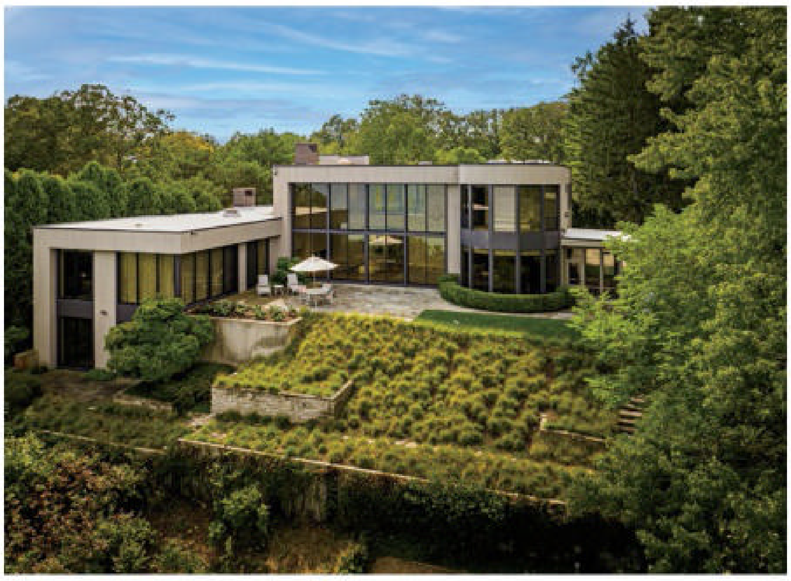
Why go this spring Iconic Irish pursuits never look better than in springtime in western Ireland, where you can enjoy blooming green hills and temperatures in the low 60s. Tiny Shannon is just your gateway: A quick drive southeast will take you to the 15th-century Bunratty Castle, while the Wild Atlantic Way coastal route includes the jaw-dropping Cliffs of Moher and the picturesque Dingle Peninsula's ancient ruins and stunning views. Want to splurge? Stay at the Adare Manor (from $1,238 a night for a deluxe room), a repurposed neo-Gothic castle 25 minutes south of Shannon.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (NEW ZEALAND) LAURIE NOBLE/GETTY IMAGES; (SPAIN) ALBERTO PEZZALI/NURPHOTO

LISTING OF THE MONTH

$8 Million View

Perched above Lake Michigan, this Glencoe contemporary is all about the vistas. By THOMAS CONNORS



HISTORICALLY, THE GREAT North Shore residences have taken their cues from English manors and Italian villas. But there are a few architecturally significant contemporary houses scattered across these well-groomed burbs, including designs by Keck & Keck and Edward Dart. One big, bold example in Glencoe designed by Tony Grunsfeld and once owned by novelist Scott Turow is now on the market at just under $8 million.

The Chicago-born Grunsfeld trained at MIT and worked for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Holabird & Root, and Bertrand Goldberg before launching a partnership with Wallace F. Yerkes in 1956. A modernist through and through, Grunsfeld, who designed several North Shore houses, was comfortable working on large-scale residences, as this 1997 home at 325 Shoreline Court attests. At over 6,000 square feet, it features massive living, dining, and kitchen spaces, as well as five bedrooms and five full and two half bathrooms.

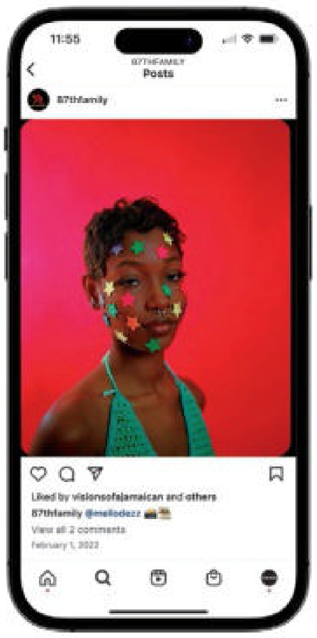
Sitting on the lake, the cedar-clad house provides stunning views, especially from the living room, with its 21-foot-high windows. A gently spiraling staircase and fireplaces contrast with the home's rigorous geometry. For all its openness, the house is designed for privacy, with the primary suite (complete with two huge walk-in closets and an office) in one wing and the smaller bedrooms in another.

The kitchen is anchored by a long bowfront island, which houses a stovetop and features an eating area big enough to seat eight-plus. Following the slope of its site, the house offers living on three levels, including a fully finished lower floor comprising a rec room, gym, and bath. Flagstone patios and a screened porch adjacent to the breakfast room make it easy to enjoy the lakeside location. C

PHOTOGRAPHY: (HOUSE) VHT STUDIOS; (INSTAGRAM) DEZMEN PATTON

Where It's @

By CORLI JAY



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- **What it is** A showcase of photographers who shoot on film
- **Who's behind it** Malik Marble, a 27-year-old special education teacher and part-time photographer
- **Why the name** Though he's from Georgia, Marble got into photography while spending summers with his father's family at 87th and Wood Streets in Auburn Gresham.
- **How it started** Marble and friends opened the account in 2018, then in 2020 began expanding it. "It's for all photographers, but we originated in Chicago," says Marble, adding that about 20 percent are now local.
- **Why film** "It just resonates way better."
- **The spinoff** Marble published a magazine of select images in October. He plans to do new issues every nine to 12 months.

THE REGIMEN

Seth Jones

Hockey All-Star, bike lover, aggressive pickleballer

By WEB BEHRENS

SETH JONES OWES A lot to genetics – and geography. At the turn of the millennium the 6-foot-4 Texas native's dad, NBA journeyman Popeye Jones, played for the Denver Nuggets (where he's now an assistant coach). That was a key time for the city's pro hockey team. Six-year-old Seth was in the stadium for Game 7, when the Colorado Avalanche clinched the Stanley Cup – and a passion was born. Two decades and countless predawn Sunday skating lessons later, Jones, 28, plays for the Blackhawks, along with younger brother Caleb. Now in his 10th NHL season (his first with Chicago), the defenseman and alternate captain just made his fifth All-Star appearance.

IRON GRIP
50

WHAT'S YOUR APPROACH TO FITNESS?
"During the season, I don't go over the top with the heavy lifting, because we play three, four games a week. When I'm not on the ice, I do most of my cardio on the bike. The past three or four summers, my trainer and I go to Vail the last week of August. We skate every day there, then do some hiking and biking trails, to get some high-altitude training in."

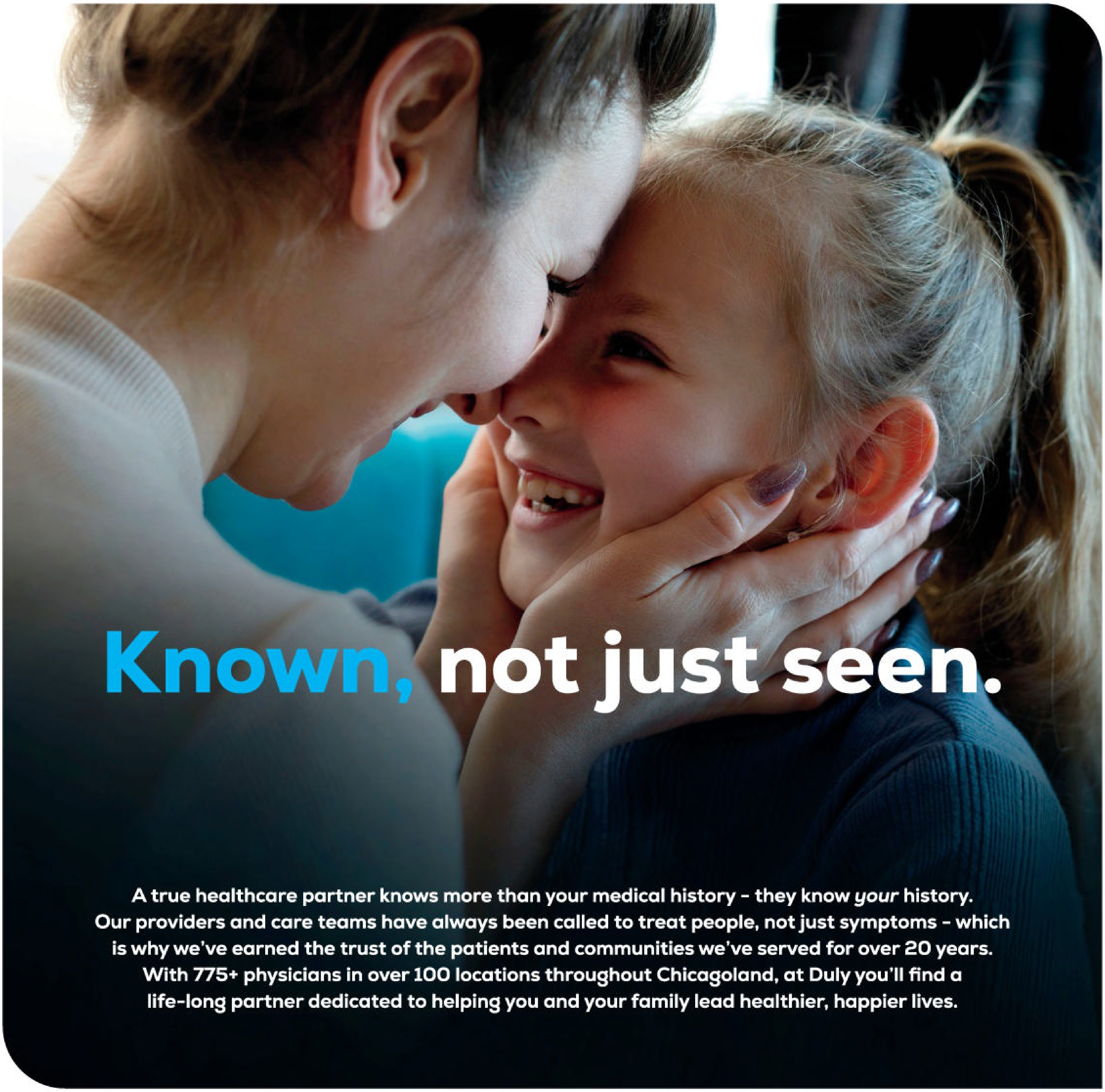
WHAT MUSIC DO YOU EXERCISE TO?
"I'm a country guy, but I listen to rap when I'm working out. Eminem, Drake, Kanye, Jack Harlow."

HOW DO YOU STAY FIT WHILE INJURED?
"I went through an ankle injury recently. I was on crutches for six weeks and couldn't skate for 10 or 11 weeks, so that was a hard time. But I had great trainers and a great medical staff to help. We did this thing called BFR [blood flow restriction]; it's a machine that squeezes your circulation."

DO YOU PLAY ANY SPORTS FOR FUN?
"I've gotten into pickleball the last few years, along with everyone else. I have a pickleball court at the house [in Dallas], so when it's not 115 degrees in the summer, I play with Caleb. The matches get pretty intense. Paddles get thrown. You know how it is with your brothers."

PHOTOGRAPHY: (HEADPHONES, BIKE) GETTY IMAGES

Photograph by LENNY GILMORE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Dogs at Large Won't Be Fenced In

Pulling from rock and country, Sam Pirruccello's band is a breed of its own. By JOSHUA M. MILLER

Photograph by ROSS FEIGHERY

BETWEEN THE SUMMERS OF 2021 and 2022, singer-songwriter Sam Pirruccello drove hundreds of miles across northern Illinois in a Toyota Tacoma for his day job with a vegetation management company. At each stop, he assessed whether trees needed to be pruned or removed based on their relationship to electrical lines.

But the journey itself could be engrossing. "I went everywhere from the middle of the city to extremely rural places," Pirruccello recalls. "I had a constant blur of different towns and counties."

All those months on the road gave Pirruccello plenty of fodder for songs, which he was able to flesh out when a double hernia surgery forced him to lie low at home in Ukrainian Village for a stretch. "As I was recovering, that time allowed me to polish demos really well."

Pirruccello with bandmates (from left) Yanda, Gilmour, and Kolodziej

Many of those songs appear on his band Dogs at Large's seventh studio album (and first vinyl pressing), *County Line*, out March 2, with a record release show that night at the Empty Bottle. "I think overall that open-road, semi-isolated feeling informed some of the vibe of the record," he says – in particular, its "pastoral energy."

Nothing is off limits for Pirruccello or the band – Dogs at Large won't be constrained to a single yard. Since forming in 2015, the band has roamed freely into whatever genre Pirruccello gets an urge to explore. The new album's sound ranges from what he describes as the "coked-out '80s glam rock" of the song "Vogue Beauty" to the pure country lead single, "Tennessee." "We like to do genre experiments with different songs," he says, "which makes it definitely less marketable but also more fun for us."

While previous albums have received local support – the *Chicago Tribune* praised the "romantic, earnest sound" of 2018's *Overpass*, and 2019's *Delusions of Paradise* was produced by Whitney's Ziyad Asrar and released on his former label, Fine Prints – the band is now garnering national attention, starting with an album announcement in the indie mag *Under the Radar*. In recent years, Pirruccello and company have shared stages with the likes of Beach Bunny, Kurt Vile, and Jenny Lewis.

Pirruccello started Dogs at Large after compiling homemade demos while playing in a variety of local bands. Taking the advice of friends, he recruited additional players to fill out the sound. Though Pirruccello, who handles lead guitar and keyboards in addition to vocals, and bass player Adam Gilmour are the only original members, the group's once-shifting lineup has solidified over the last few albums; the current slate also includes drummer Chris Kolodziej and guitarist Jamie Yanda. "I think I've finally accepted that Dogs at Large is really a band now and it's not just me doing songs," Pirruccello says.

"I think I've finally accepted that Dogs at Large is really a band now."

Having grown up singing in choirs, he always fretted that his voice was too clean-sounding for garage rock, but *County Line* helped him make peace with that. "Country music appeals to me because it really showcases the vocals and you're not trying to hide them behind a bunch of distorted guitars."

Musical leanings run deep in Pirruccello's family. In 1975, his father, Bo, and uncle Frank cofounded the country-rock band Ouray (which recently reunited). "That sort of music is just in my DNA," says Pirruccello. His father and uncles also run Lakland, a respected maker of electric bass guitars, where Pirruccello helped prep parts while in high school. Dogs at Large used the building's basement as a practice space for *County Line*.

While Dogs at Large will play shows around the city and beyond this year in support of *County Line*, Pirruccello is already eager to get back into the studio: "After I finish a record, I'm always pretty quick to want to move on to something else, to try to make something not better but just different."

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW MARCZAK

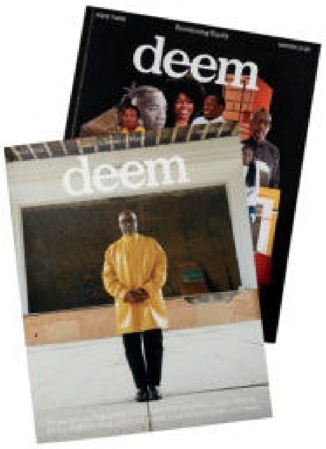
AGENDA

Top 10 reasons to fill up your calendar this month

By KRIS VIRE

AS YOU'LL LIKE IT

The reopening of the iO Theater brings with it the return of the brilliant Improvised Shakespeare Company, whose Bard-brained performers deftly craft whole Elizabethan-style spoofs before your eyes. *Ongoing. improvisedshakespeare.com*



DESIGN FOR LIVING

The forward-thinking design magazine *Deem* partners with the Museum of Contemporary Art for "Designing for Dignity: A Convening of Possibilities," a full-day symposium on inclusive and equitable opportunities in the discipline. *Mar. 4. mcachicago.org*

HAVE AN IPA AT THE MSI

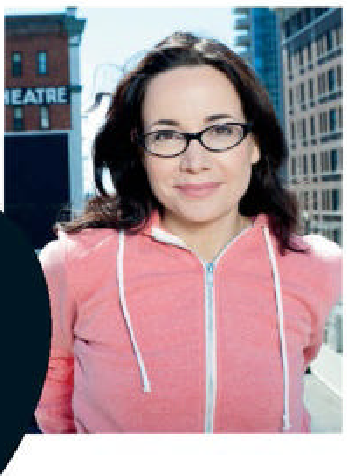
Roam the Museum of Science and Industry after hours while sipping samples from more than 60 craft brewers at the Brewsology Beer Fest. *Mar. 4. brewsology.com*

AILEY BASIS

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's annual visit to the Auditorium Theatre is a can't-miss for dance lovers. This year's program includes two new works by choreographers Kyle Abraham and Jamar Roberts. *Mar. 8–12. auditoriumtheatre.org*

GAINES'S GOODBYE

Closing out her nearly 40-year tenure at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, founding artistic director Barbara Gaines restages her 1940s-set take on the mistaken-identity farce *The Comedy of Errors*. *Mar. 9–Apr. 16. chicagoshakes.com*



X MARKS THE SPOT

As a recent *New York Times* piece noted, the comedian Janeane Garofalo never started a podcast, isn't on social media, and no longer makes TV specials. If you want to experience the Gen X icon's standup—and you should—it has to be in person; you'll have four chances at the Den this month. *Mar. 10–11. thedentheatre.com*

TWO TINAS

The title role of the Broadway hit *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical* is so demanding that two actors, Naomi Rodgers and Zurin Villanueva, take turns at alternating performances in the touring production that comes to the James M. Nederlander Theatre this month. We're sure both are simply the best. *Mar. 14–Apr. 2. broadwayinchicago.com*

BLUES SISTER

Done Come Too Far, the latest release from Chicago vocal powerhouse Shemekia Copeland, earned her a second consecutive Grammy nomination for best contemporary blues album. Catch her live at the Evanston venue Space. *Mar. 16. evanstonspace.com*

CHORAL FORMATION

The choral music group Bella Voce, which specializes in drawing connections between early European tradition and contemporary composers, turns 40 this year. Its spring concert includes pieces by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt as well as rising talents Anna Thorvaldsdottir, Julia Wolfe, and Caroline Shaw. *Mar. 18–19. bellavoce.org*

HAHN, SOLO

The celebrated violinist Hilary Hahn has made several appearances alongside the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since being named the CSO's first artist-in-residence in 2021. At this recital, Hahn takes the stage alone, playing three Bach pieces composed for solo violin. *Mar. 19. cso.org*

PHOTOGRAPHY: (*DEEM*) SARA POOLEY; (GAROFALO) STEVEN DEWALL; (TURNER) MATTHEW MURPHY; (HAHN) OJ SLAUGHTER; (DANCE) DARIO CALMESE

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The Blanche at TriBecca's Sandwich Shop

Sunny Starts

Fancy egg sandwiches, featuring everything from longanisa to braised kale, are having a moment. Try these five.

By AMY CAVANAUGH

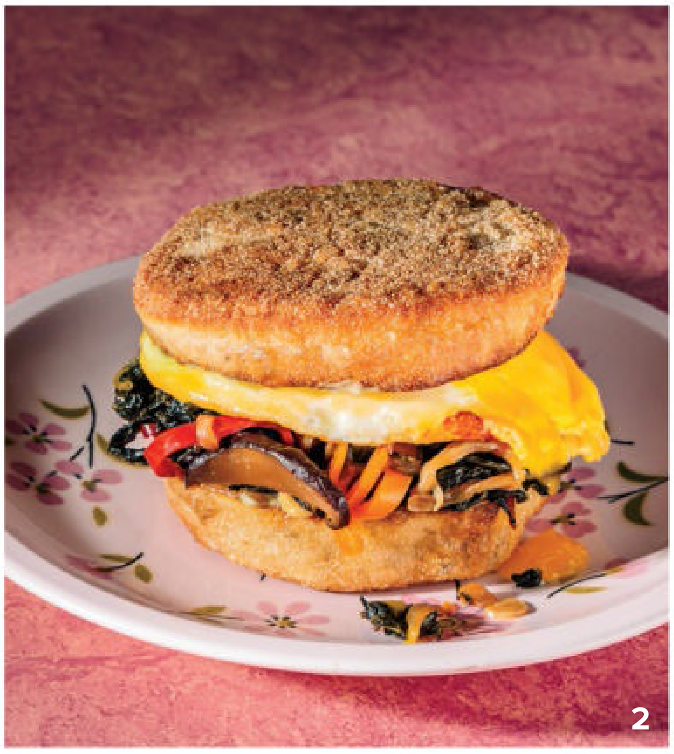
Photography by JEFF MARINI

1

THE BLANCHE

TRIBECCA'S SANDWICH SHOP

The tiny shop offers a line of four *Golden Girls*–themed English muffin breakfast sandwiches (one for each character), and the Blanche pays homage to the saucy Southern belle. It features candied bacon, a folded scrambled egg, white cheddar, Duke's mayo, and some pickled jalapeños for a little tangy heat. *$8.95. 2949 W. Belmont Ave., Avondale*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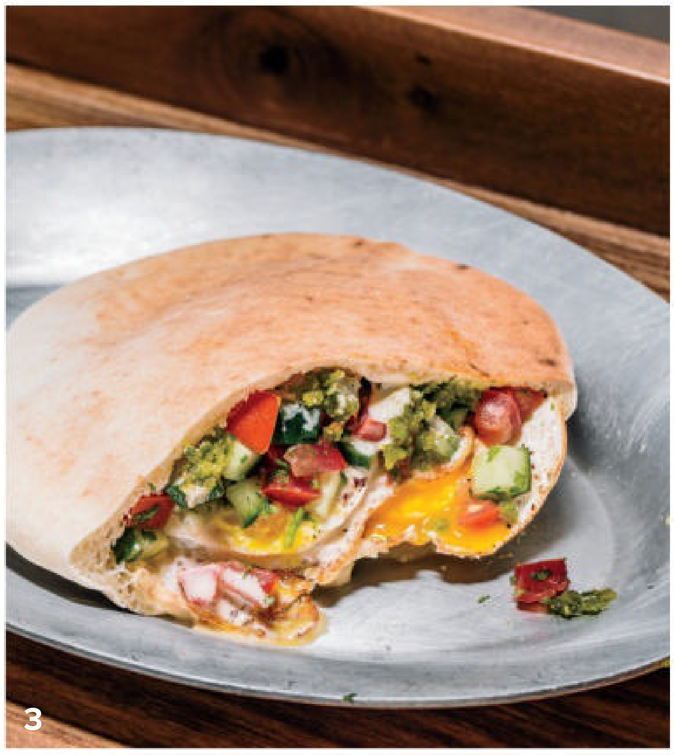
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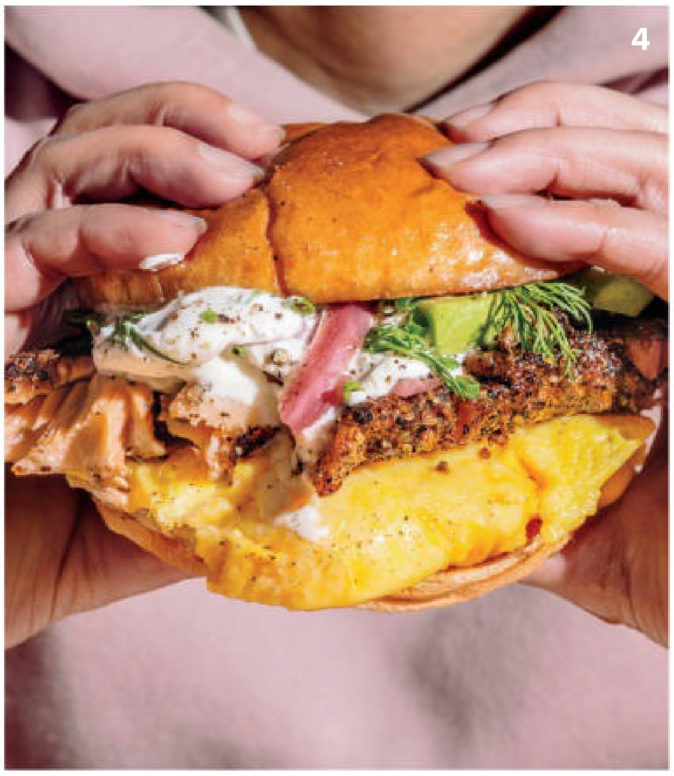
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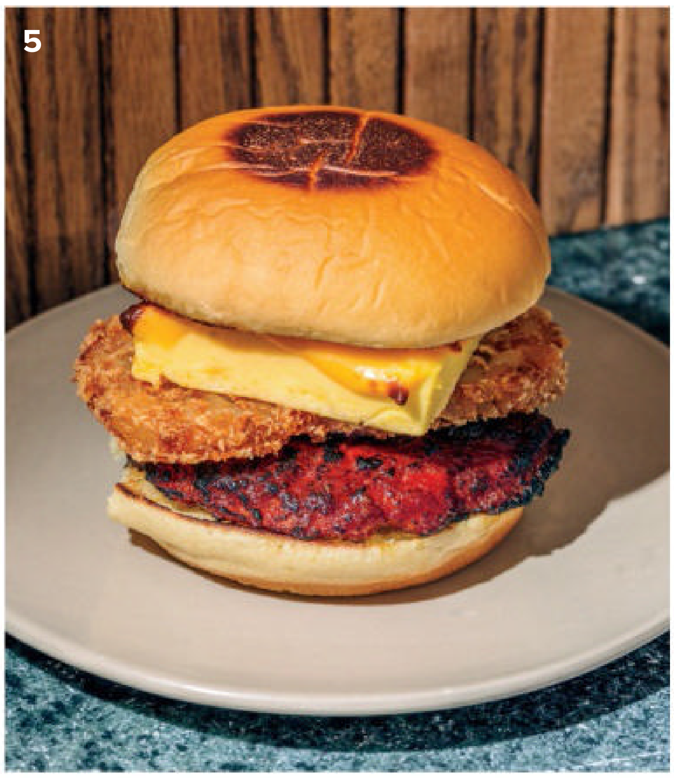
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VEGGIE, EGG, AND CHEESE BREAKFAST SANDWICH

LOAF LOUNGE

Loaded with braised kale, pickled mushrooms and peppers, herbed mayo, American cheese, and a perfectly runny egg, this tasty number is a worthy order whether you're vegetarian or not. The tender housemade English muffin brings it home. *$8. 2934 N. Milwaukee Ave., Avondale*

3

FRIED EGG SANDWICH

RAGADAN

A Jordanian street-food-inspired spot, Ragadan offers creative egg sandwiches in addition to falafel and burgers. This one features two fried eggs, a swipe of hummus, tahini salad, and spicy green chile sauce, all tucked into a pita. Bonus: It's available all day. *$8. 4409 N. Broadway, Uptown*

4

FREEMAN TORTA

SECOND GENERATION

During brunch (available Friday to Sunday), you can get this behemoth of a breakfast sando with salmon belly pastrami, scrambled egg, avocado, dill, and crema on a brioche bun. It's just the serious breakfast you need to fuel your weekend. *$17. 3057 W. Logan Blvd., Logan Square*

5

BREAKFAST SANDWICH

KASAMA

You can order it with either a longanisa sausage patty or a hash brown, but the correct answer is with both. The fluffy egg, sweet-savory longanisa, crispy hash brown, and melty American cheese layered on a squishy potato bun is a master class in texture. *$11.75. 1001 N. Winchester Ave., East Ukrainian Village*

Ask the Dining Editor

What are the best BYOBs in town?
Let's start with Bayan Ko (1810 W. Montrose Ave., Ravenswood), where the Filipino-Cuban menu (get the Cubano fried rice and thank me later) goes nicely with a bottle of dry rosé. I'd bring an off-dry Riesling to match the delicious fare at In-On Thai (4641 N. Broadway, Uptown). Finally, there's nothing more fun than tearing into bags of seafood at the Angry Crab (multiple locations, theangrycrabchicago.com) with a cold Pilsner in hand.

What place would you recommend for a festive anniversary dinner?
HaiSous Vietnamese Kitchen (1800 S. Carpenter St., Pilsen) always feels like a celebration. You can opt for the family-style dinner, which has a rotating theme (currently it's an exploration of Thai-Vietnamese cuisine). Or pick from the à la carte menu. My favorites? The rib eye with charred onions and the chopped clams, which you pile onto grilled rice crackers.
–AMY CAVANAUGH

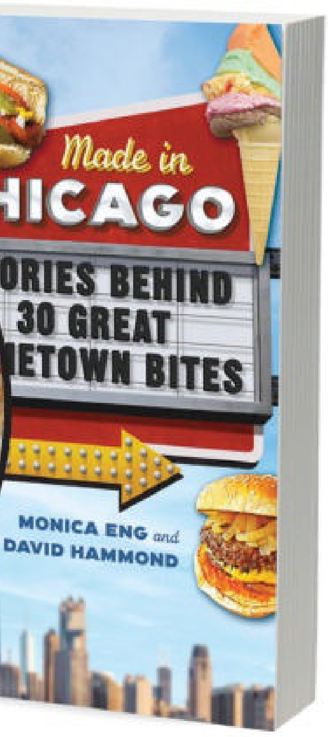
Email Amy at acavanaugh@chicagomag.com with your burning dining questions.

PHOTOGRAPHY: UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS | ILLUSTRATION: GREG CLARKE

FIVE THINGS

Tasty Tidbits

In their book, *Made in Chicago* (out March 21), food writers Monica Eng and David Hammond go deep on the origins of 30 hometown dishes. Here's what we learned. By AMY CAVANAUGH



1 JIM'S ORIGINAL OFFERS AN ORIGINAL CONDIMENT. It's called pepper-hot mustard, and it's a combination of local Plochman's mustard mixed with chopped sport peppers. Owner Jim Christopoulos, the grandson of the founder, pickles his own serrano peppers. He says chopping them up into the mustard means better distribution of flavor than if you slapped a couple of whole sport peppers on your Polish sausage. Genius.

2 CHICAGO HAS TWO DISTINCT KINDS OF EGG ROLLS. You may or may not know that there's peanut butter binding the egg rolls at many local Chinese restaurants (that's why they're so good). You need to add a second style to your dining list—those stuffed with jerk chicken. Within the last decade, a number of Black-owned restaurants on the South and West Sides, such as 3 Kings Jerk in Austin, began offering egg rolls with spicy chicken, cabbage, and carrots.

3 THE MALÖRT RECIPE DID INDEED CHANGE. Avid imbibers of Jeppson's Malört speculated that when CH Distillery took over ownership and distilling of the city's favorite bitter liqueur in 2018, it got a little less astringent. CH owner Tremaine Atkinson confirmed that it tweaked the recipe to make it more balanced and removed the artificial coloring, which ultimately changed the flavor.

4 TWO LOCAL FAVORITES STARTED OUT A LITTLE DIFFERENT. What would a Chicago hot dog be without a pickle? The dragged-through-the-garden dog we know and love took time to get to its current iteration. Early on, it featured cucumbers, which were swapped out for a tangy pickle (both locations of Byron's Hot Dogs still offer cucumbers). Also, the Palmer House flavor on the Rainbow Cone was once maple walnut. "The profile didn't fit with the Rainbow Cone," says Lynn Sapp, granddaughter of the founder.

5 A JORDANIAN IMMIGRANT CREATED THE STEAK AND LEMONADE COMBO. Eng tracked down the inventor of this South and West Side pairing, which consists of a Philly cheesesteak–like sandwich and a lemonade slushie. Haitham Allabadi launched it at his now-closed Country Club Hills restaurant in 1998, and it has proliferated around the area. The drink nods to limonana, a Middle Eastern mint lemonade slushie. Try it at any of the three locations of his new restaurant, Baba's Famous Steak & Lemonade.

REVIEW

Food Hall Fancy

With Valhalla, Stephen Gillanders finds his voice in an unlikely location. By JOHN KESSLER

Maitake kebab

Black Marble Pavlova

Gillanders with pastry chef Tatum Sinclair

When the influential Copenhagen restaurant Noma announced in January that it would stop serving paying guests next year and turn into a food lab in 2025, folks were split. Food writers and some diners argued the closure portended a paradigm shift away from tweezer food and endless tasting menus. Such dinners, they said, demand too much on the part of guests: too much time, money, planning, and patience. Restaurant workers, on the other hand, focused on the shittiness of the jobs. To keep the cost of a meal down to the mere hundreds of dollars, places like Noma rely on the labor of under- or unpaid cooks who weather verbal abuse and long days of menial, repetitive labor to buff their résumés.

The fallout from these conversations will certainly be felt here. Few cities are as invested in ultrapremium dining as ours. Since I began reviewing restaurants for this magazine nearly a year ago, I've been gobsmacked by how much of the city's talent sequesters itself inside the world of expensive tasting-menu restaurants that only rich Michelin-star hunters and worshipful foodies have much appetite for.

But what of Valhalla, an unlikely fine-dining venue that opened in September in a corner of the mezzanine overlooking Time Out Market food hall? When word went out that its chef-owner, Stephen Gillanders (S.K.Y., Apolonia), would be serving a $185 tasting menu, my first thought was: Pass. Chicago doesn't need another one of those. Yet unlike many other tasting-menu restaurants, Valhalla offers an à la carte option. This lured me in, and I'm glad it did – Gillanders is cooking in a way I never could have foreseen from his previous work, and in my opinion, he's turning out the most exciting new food in Chicago.

Yet as Gillanders himself noted in an interview, "This restaurant is weird." To find it, you'll need to venture through the crowded, noisy, fryer-oil-fragrant food hall in search of stairs. Once you're up on the mostly vacant mezzanine, look for

Photography by JEFF MARINI

Valhalla's sign. There is an open kitchen surrounded by an eating bar, and a barely furnished dining room that reminds me of the quiet upstairs corner of my college library, where I used to study when I was too busy to socialize.

The counter is the best place to sit. It's where Gillanders cooks and plates his dishes with precision but no tweezered herbs. Instead, he helps the ingredients taste intensely of themselves. A lot of confiting and emulsifying goes into his maitake kebab, but what we taste is the way these mushroom clusters hit the tongue with their crisp, fluttery caps and silky flesh.

VALHALLA
★★★
916 W. Fulton Market, West Loop
■ **Dinner for two** $300 à la carte; $700 to $800 for the tasting menu
■ **Tip** If you're wary of the cost, have an app at the bar, then go downstairs to the market vendors for your entrée.

★ Recommended
★★ Very good ★★★ Excellent
★★★★ Exceptional

Gillanders opened more than a dozen restaurants for Jean-Georges Vongerichten, and I see Vongerichten's teachings in the way he uses bright colors and varied cooking methods on one plate to bring juxtaposing flavors into focus. The Lamb Chop 4.0 is like a Scotch egg made with rosy meat wrapped in crisp-fried sausage. With each forkful, stab a piece of fried purple cauliflower, swipe it through the tomato curry sauce, and daub it with ginger relish for the perfect bite.

I admire the way Gillanders understands temperature. Ice-cold cured fluke in a bracing vinaigrette with sour apple matchsticks and pine nuts comes into focus as it warms on the tongue. Mozzarella surrounds a heart of eggplant relish and arrives warm from having been pulled to order in boiling water. At this temperature, you can experience the tension of snap and creaminess in the freshly made cheese.

Most impressive is Gillanders's first attempt of his career at interpreting his Filipina mother's cooking. In his hands, crab arroz caldo becomes a kind of congee with a steamy heat that catches in the back of the throat before releasing waves of flavor – lime, chile, fennel, and sweet, sweet crab. My daughter and I took turns spooning it up, letting each bite tell its story. What magic.

The food here can also be just plain fun, which stands in stark contrast to the twee whimsy ("This is Chef's take on a favorite childhood memory") at many Chicago restaurants. Begin with a glass of Champagne and a delightful assortment of savory pastries, each a doppelgänger for a cinnamon roll or madeleine but tasting of truffle or scallion. If it's on special, order the crisp-gooey fried mochi stuffed with cheese curds onto which Gillanders grates 10 grams of black truffle. He understands the *Tuber melanosporum* paradox: To appreciate its natural flavor, you need to wallow in it. Gillanders claims he loses a few bucks with each serving but that seeing his guests react is worth it.

I tried the tasting menu one evening, along with one of sommelier Jelena Prodan's three pairings, which balanced classic varietal expressions and offbeat ringers that didn't slip too far down the natural wine rabbit hole. The meal was filled with courses that made me stop and pay attention. But Gillanders's food comes across better without all the extras, and the dishes that straddle both menus show better in larger portions (not to mention, it's much more affordable to opt for à la carte). Same goes for crack pastry chef Tatum Sinclair, who serves fun one-bites on the tasting menu but has a genius black-and-white Pavlova dome to order à la carte. You smash it open to reveal all kinds of fresh, frozen, creamy, and puddingy fruit flavors, and it is a dessert to fight over.

Whichever side of the menu you go for, notice that everyone working in the kitchen and on the floor signs it. More than a friendly gesture, this detail shows off what appears to be a genuine esprit de corps among the staff. I could be totally wrong, but my senses and observations tell me this is a good place to work. The future of fine dining, I think, will look a lot like Valhalla.

NEIGHBORHOOD FIND

Big Fish

YAO YAO
230 W. Cermak Rd., Chinatown
■ **Perfect order** Pickled fish hot pot, sesame fried shrimp, smashed cucumbers

■ In recent years, an influx of money from Asia has transformed Chinatown, replacing beloved if long-in-the-tooth Cantonese places with bright restaurants in line with international tastes. Dim sum parlors have been supplanted by Taiwanese teahouses, Korean barbecues, Sichuan spice-o-ramas, and hot pot spots. So many hot pot spots.

My favorite of this new guard is Yao Yao, the first American branch of a Chinese chain based in Shenzhen. What distinguishes this place — besides its aquamarine walls and breezy-cheesy murals — is its devotion to getting one hot pot recipe right. Instead of the vast array of ingredients, broths, and dipping sauces you'll find elsewhere, Yao Yao specializes in suan cai yu, a steaming stew of velvety freshwater fish (largemouth bass here) and pickled mustard greens in a lively, chile-tinged broth ($48 and big enough to serve two). You may throw in tofu skins and enoki mushrooms, but you'll be fighting over the last slips of fish.

You can supplement the meal with wonderful small dishes, all under $11. Think sesame fried shrimp, smashed cukes, sausage fried rice, and wood ear mushrooms in black vinegar. My only advice: Skip the spicy beef hot pot offered as an add-on in a yin-yang bowl. You can get better elsewhere. That fish, though, is destination-worthy.
–JOHN KESSLER

Pickled fish hot pot with shrimp and cucumbers

IN THE KITCHEN

Sizzle Reel

SIMPLE TO MAKE AND SUPER SHAREABLE, THE SPICY-SWEET SHRIMP AT CEBU, A Filipino restaurant in Wicker Park, has a good-time vibe that wouldn't be out of place at a buzzing Madrid tapas bar. And that's no coincidence: Co-owner Marlon Tan explains that the sizzling shrimp is a play on gambas al ajillo, one of the quintessential tapas of the Philippines' former colonizer, Spain. A big punch of garlic nods to the original, while a sweet, velvety coating of ketchup, soy sauce, and oyster sauce subverts it for a dish that hits notes both familiar and surprising. Serve it with rice or garlic bread to sop up every last drop of the delicious sauce. –CATE HUGUELET

CEBU'S SIZZLING GAMBAS

Makes 2 servings
Active time 15 minutes
Total time 20 minutes

2 Tbsp. neutral oil
4 Tbsp. minced garlic
1 lb. raw easy-peel jumbo shrimp
½ cup ketchup
¼ cup oyster sauce
2 Tbsp. soy sauce
2 Tbsp. light brown sugar
¼ tsp. black pepper
2 Tbsp. softened butter
1 tsp. chile flakes
Rice or garlic bread for serving

1

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add shrimp and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until cooked through, 10 to 12 minutes.

2

Meanwhile, combine ketchup, oyster sauce, soy sauce, brown sugar, and pepper in a small bowl. Add sauce to the skillet, gently tossing shrimp to coat. When sauce begins to simmer, about 1 minute, add butter, stirring until it is fully incorporated.

3

Remove the skillet from the heat and stir in chile flakes. Serve immediately alongside rice or garlic bread.

Photograph by JEFF MARINI

The Hot List

10 places everyone's talking about (in order of heat)

1 **KINDLING DOWNTOWN COOKOUT & COCKTAILS** **What** Jonathon Sawyer (Adorn, Cleveland's Greenhouse Tavern) heads up this sprawling new Loop spot from the Fifty/50 Restaurant Group that features plates cooked over the live fire hearth. **Why** Expect a global tour of flavors with bites like Sawyer's now-classic jalapeño-lime confit chicken wings, duck rigatoni, and a loaded raw bar with oysters four ways (try Versailles style, with Champagne Hollandaise and caviar). **Where** *202 S. Franklin St., Loop*

Twice-cooked sweet potato

2 **THE M ROOM** **What** A tasting-menu restaurant from Roka Akor chef Ce Bian that's inspired by (*checks notes*) Macallan Scotch **Why** Expect dishes like wagyu tataki with barley miso and fresh truffle paired with Scotch cocktails or neat pours. **Where** *450 N. Clark St., River North*

3 **BRASSERIE BY C&C** **What** The restaurant formerly known as Cookies & Carnitas is now a seasonally focused brasserie. **Why** Jesse Lee offers à la carte plates like seared salmon with root veggie succotash as well as a $45 three-course tasting menu. **Where** *5940 N. Broadway, Edgewater*

4 **ADORN BAR & RESTAURANT** **What** When the chef job opened (see No. 1), the Four Seasons tapped Richie Farina (Ever). **Why** Expect his signature creative touches, plus a tasting menu come spring. **Where** *120 E. Delaware Pl., Gold Coast*

5 **BAGEL MILLER** **What** A reconcepted Baker Miller puts the spotlight on, you guessed it, bagels. **Why** There are a bunch of fun sandwiches on the menu, but how do you not order the Chicago style, with bologna, giard, tomato, pickle, relish, mustard, and celery salt on poppyseed? **Where** *4655 N. Lincoln Ave., Lincoln Square*

6 **SOULÉ** **What** Bridgette Flagg opens a new location of her West Town Creole-soul favorite. **Why** The space is bigger than the original, so bring friends for the honey-drizzled fried chicken. **Where** *3615 W. Roosevelt Rd., Lawndale*

7 **ADALINA** **What** The glitzy Italian spot debuts an $85 seven-course tasting menu with all-new dishes. **Why** Sample plates like a cacio e pepe with a five-peppercorn sauce and a fruity Pavlova. **Where** *912 N. State St., Near North Side*

8 **SCOFFLAW** **What** Fred Chung (Kasama, Oriole) takes over the kitchen at the gin-focused cocktail bar. **Why** Fuel up for cocktails with scallion pancakes with fire chicken or a beet Reuben. **Where** *3201 W. Armitage Ave., Logan Square*

9 **CHESA'S BISTRO & BAR** **What** A new gluten-free restaurant from the founder of the Gluten Tootin Free Food Truck **Why** Find creative Creole fare, like grits with pepper Jack and short ribs. **Where** *3235 W. Addison St., Avondale*

10 **KYURAMEN X TBAAR** **What** A Japanese newcomer offering warming bowls like Korean kimchi ramen and tonkatsu curry ramen **Why** Who can say no to ramen, especially this time of year? **Where** *6 W. Hubbard St., Near North Side*

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GAGA SLONINA | BIANCA PASTEL | OMER ABBAS SALEM | VINOD KALATHIL AND MARGARET PAK | DAVID MOR
KIA SMITH | NABEELA SYED | LIAM KAZAR | STEPHANIE MORIMOTO | JORGE NERI | TOYA WOLFE | SAM SHEPHERD

WHO'S GOT NEXT?

REMEMBER THEIR NAMES. THESE RISING STARS IN THE ARTS, SPORTS, POLITICS, AND MORE ARE BOUND FOR BIG THINGS IN CHICAGO — AND BEYOND.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAYTON HAUCK AND NOLIS ANDERSON

“You always see kids wanting to be like MJ,” says soccer pro Gaga Slonina. “I want to be that person in football as a goalkeeper.”

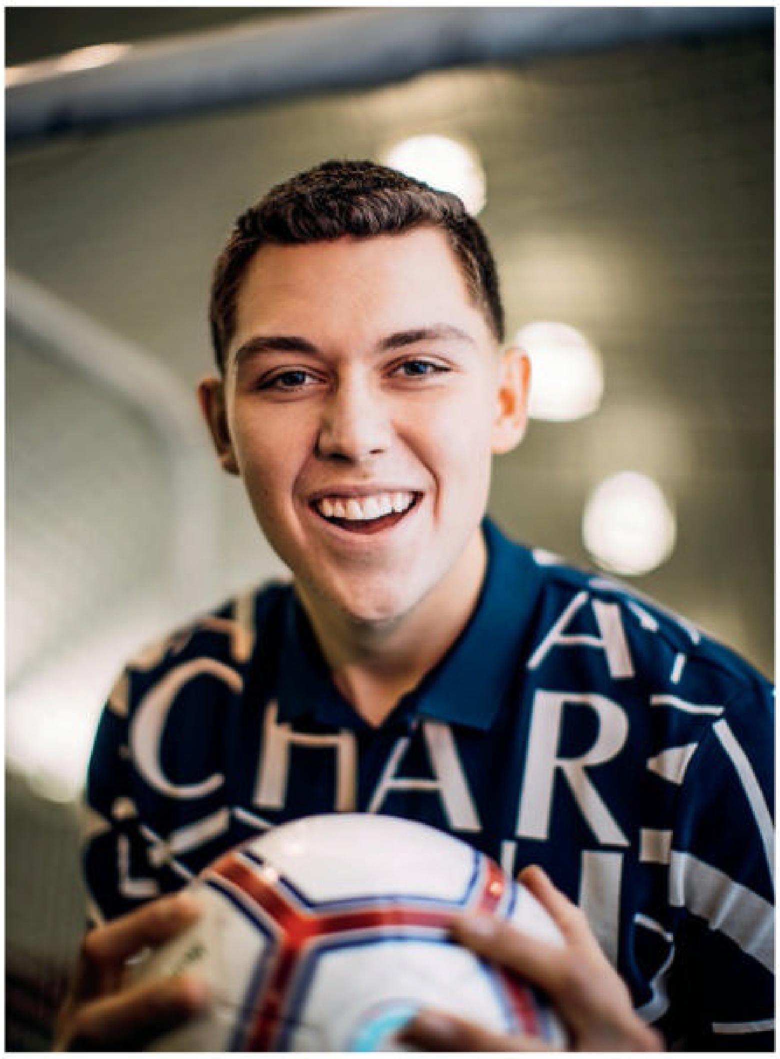
THE SOCCER PHENOM

GAGA SLONINA

It was late December, and Gaga Slonina needed to start packing. In just a few days, the 18-year-old former Chicago Fire goalkeeper would trade his childhood bedroom in Addison for an apartment in London. He was set to join English Premier League giant Chelsea, which had agreed to pay up to $15 million to his old club to sign Slonina to a six-year deal. (His own annual compensation will jump from $148,000 to an estimated $2.6 million, according to the website Capology.) "Being on my own is something I look forward to," Slonina says matter-of-factly. "You kind of have to become more responsible and do the things that adults have to do in their daily life."

It's a big move, but then again, Slonina isn't your average teenager. He meditates daily. (Goalkeeping, he says, is "80 to 90 percent mental.") He writes in his journal every day. (He's filled 15 of them.) And he keeps a list of his goals on a dry erase board in his room. One of them? "To become a Chelsea legend." But he has even loftier aspirations. "You always see kids wanting to be like MJ," Slonina says. "I want to be that person in football as a goalkeeper."

The son of Polish immigrants, Slonina (whose first name is Gabriel—he picked up the nickname Gaga back when he played Addison Park District soccer) turned pro at 14. He got his first start for the Fire in August 2021, but it almost didn't happen. Just hours beforehand, his old BMW broke down on I-290 on the way to Soldier Field. The Fire ordered him an Uber, but to reach the pickup spot, the 6-foot-4 keeper had to hop over the median and cross the expressway. Slonina, who at 17 became the youngest starting goalkeeper in MLS history, wasn't fazed—he ended up keeping a clean sheet.



Soon Petr Cech, Chelsea's iconic former goalkeeper and then a club adviser, was DM'ing him on Instagram. ("I thought it was fake," Slonina recalls.) Now Slonina will fight to become a starter for his new team—and his native country. The World Cup is coming to North America in 2026, and there's a good chance he will be in net for the United States. That's his goal, anyway. He may even write it down. —STANLEY KAY | 📷 C.H.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS CARTOONIST

BIANCA PASTEL

Artist Bianca Pastel has already collaborated with the likes of Nike, Disney, and the Chicago Bears. She's illustrated a children's book. But she has even bigger ambitions. "I want to be the Walt Disney or Miyazaki of my world and bring Black animation to life," Pastel, 30, says. "These are my dreams, and I am fully capable of them."

Pastel, who grew up in Country Club Hills and lives in Pilsen, got her start interning for Hebru Brantley after graduating from Columbia College. Once labeled Brantley's protégé, she has since made a name for herself as an illustrator, animator, and graphic designer. Her style of pop art, inspired by the '90s cartoons *Rugrats* and *Hey Arnold!*, employs similar whimsical settings not just to evoke nostalgia but also to push back against the omission of Black people in feel-good animated content.

Pastel spent the first year of the pandemic imagining the high jinks of her characters Binky, Fern, and Ashley, three Black elementary school girls. She would routinely upload drawings of their adventures to Instagram. A year later, she and Brantley started pitching *Yo, Binky*, an animated series featuring the trio. She's still shopping it, but she's had discussions with major studios.

Creating art has helped Pastel, who is nonbinary, deal with mental health struggles and reconnect with her inner child. "I use art to figure out who I was before the world was forced on me," she says. It's given her a mission, too. "I'm working on a cartoon about a Black girl where I get to discuss mental health and be free in a way that my parents and my grandparents weren't able to be." —XIMENA N. BELTRAN QUAN KIU | 📷 C.H.

“I want to be the Walt Disney or Miyazaki of my world and bring Black animation to life,” says Pastel. “These are my dreams, and I am fully capable of them.”

THE STAGE SAVANT

OMER ABBAS SALEM

On a frigid Sunday morning in December, the Goodman Theatre had a full house for a staged reading of *Modern Women*, a work in progress by actor-turned-playwright Omer Abbas Salem. The piece is a riff on *Steel Magnolias*, with the setting transferred from Louisiana to Skokie, and Southern belle archetypes remade into Arab and Indian aunties.

Steel Magnolias was among the first plays Salem saw as a student at Hinsdale South High School two decades ago. “It stuck with me because it was a story of people who found each other and loved each other just like a family would, even though they weren’t related,” the 34-year-old tells me at an Andersonville coffee shop the next day. “That felt really important to me.”

A scene-stealer on Chicago stages for the past decade, Salem is relatively new to writing; his first full production, an absurdist comedy called *The Secretaries*, opened just last spring at the tiny First Floor Theater. But his scripts were drawing fans at the city’s biggest theaters even before then: Two were given virtual readings by Steppenwolf and the Goodman in early 2021.

Last fall, About Face Theatre premiered one of those, *Mosque4Mosque*, an incisive comedy about dating as a queer Muslim child of immigrants. Salem played the lead, but while he is also queer, Muslim, and a child of immigrants (from Turkey and North Africa), don’t assume the character was autobiographical. He wrote it to better understand someone he had been in a relationship with — a relationship that came to “a strange ending,” as Salem puts it. Composing *Mosque4Mosque*, he says, “was pretty cathartic.”

Up next: Jackalope Theatre will premiere his latest, *Pretty Shahid*, in June. Salem describes it as “a wild ’90s rom-com, with dance numbers and a soundtrack.” He’ll be in the cast, naturally: “I write a part for myself in every single play.”

–KRIS VIRE | 📷 N.A.

“I write a part for myself in every single play,” says Salem, a lauded stage actor who’s making a name for himself as a playwright.

VINOD KALATHIL AND MARGARET PAK

Thattu, the restaurant that Margaret Pak and Vinod Kalathil are in the midst of opening on Rockwell Street in Avondale, is an Indian spot like nothing Chicago has seen: a market, a lounge, a bar, a place for a quick lunch or a full dinner. Above all, it's an exploration of the food and coastal vibe of Kalathil's native Kerala.

Pak, 45, and Kalathil, 54, met on the floor of a Las Vegas dance club 20 years ago—she a Korean American statistician from California in town for her 40th Tori Amos concert, he a consultant who traveled the world designing warehouses. After three years of a long-distance relationship, they both relocated to Chicago. They soon married and went to India to visit Kalathil's mother, who prepared fish molee and payasam (rice pudding), typical dishes from the Malabar Coast. For Pak, a self-proclaimed "expert eater," it was instant love.

She made the transition to expert cook when, a decade later, she was laid off and Won Kim of Kimski took her under his wing. "With Margaret it's all or nothing," Kalathil says. The couple launched the first iteration of Thattu in the food hall Politan Row in 2019. During the 10 months it was open, it earned rave notices, including a James Beard Award semifinalist nod. "But the volume was soul sucking," Pak recalls. "Seven days a week, and 14-plus hours a day."

This version, set in an old dental implements factory with exquisite light hitting its Chicago common brick walls, will be different. A dedicated staff earning salaries, not tips, will run the restaurant five days a week, and the place will share the laid-back but creative vibe of Guild Row, the social club next door to which the couple belong. As Kalathil says, "It's not just about the food, it's about the human interaction."

–JOHN KESSLER | 📷 C.H.

THE HOSPITALITY INNOVATOR

DAVID MOR

For bartender David Mor, 28, the hospitality industry is about more than just good food and drinks. “I love getting people to relax,” he says. “I want people to feel seen and noticed.” But he is also conscious of the less rosy side of the business. “There’s virtually no support from anyone bigger than us. The money is not trickling down to those who need it.” So he set out to create a support network for the industry himself.

Mor was working at the now-closed Bad Hunter when the pandemic upended bars and restaurants. That was the catalyst for Spill, a multimedia platform he started and runs with designer Kisira Hill. Under that umbrella, they publish *Guest Check*, a print magazine by and for hospitality workers, and organize Hustles, an event series that showcases the side ventures of industry folks. “Hospitality people have so many skills that are not shaking a cocktail or serving a Burrata,” Mor says. He and Hill also host the podcast *Anthropological*, which examines the industry in the context of history and culture. “I thought it would be cool to have an uncensored look at the mind of a hospitality pro,” he says.

That goes for Head Bartender in Charge, too, the subscription website Mor launched last year. It features video classes taught by such top drink mixers as Scott Kitsmiller of the Bamboo Room and Paige Walwyn of Queen Mary, as well as recipes and discussion boards. In keeping with Mor’s larger mission, the expert guests get a cut of the proceeds.

And now he’s taking his bartending career into his own hands. Late last year, he left a job at Boeufhaus to form Mor Hospitality with Rami Ezzat of Robert et Fils, Sarah Kmiec of Bavette’s Bar & Boeuf, and his fiancé, Matt Hunnel, who worked in hospitality at RH (previously known as Restoration Hardware). Their first order of business: opening a bar, Truce, this summer in Bucktown.

–AMY CAVANAUGH | 📷 C.H.

THE IN-DEMAND DANCER

KIA SMITH

Kia Smith is running a half-million-dollar organization out of her closet. In 2017, she started South Chicago Dance Theatre with a few dancers, a whole lot of grit, and a 75-year plan taped to the walls of a walk-in closet in her Hyde Park studio apartment. Now? The 35-year-old choreographer has grown SCDT from a scrappy troupe to a major player in Chicago's dance scene.

The company capped its fifth anniversary last spring with its biggest leap yet, premiering five new works at the Harris Theater, filling all 1,500 seats. Compare that with their previous in-person show, at the Stony Island Arts Bank before the pandemic. "We had like 80 people," says Smith, who's also SCDT's executive artistic director.

Smith, though, isn't just filling up auditoriums around town—she's blowing up everywhere. In the past year alone, she's earned choreography commissions from the likes of the Houston Contemporary Dance Company and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, plus creative residencies in Berlin and at Jacob's Pillow, the famed dance center in Massachusetts. And she has taken SCDT touring everywhere from Michigan to the Netherlands.

Smith knew by age 5 that she wanted to run a dance company—and that it was going to be on the South Side. She grew up in South Shore, Washington Heights, and Kenwood, and her father, Jimmy Ellis, helped start the storied Hyde Park Jazz Festival, as well as the iconic South Side tradition Jazz in the Alley. That inspired Smith's next venture: *Memoirs of Jazz in the Alley*, an evening-length dance opera set to premiere at the Auditorium Theatre in June. While Smith is charting her own course in the arts, she's also determined to use dance to examine the history and culture of the South Side. Says Smith: "I see what I'm doing as contributing to something that was already here." –LAUREN WARNECKE | 📷 N.A.

> **"**
>
> **I see what I'm doing as contributing to something that was already here," Smith says.**

THE GEN Z LEGISLATOR

NABEELA SYED

Last spring, during her campaign for the Illinois House of Representatives, Nabeela Syed was knocking on doors when she passed out in front of a potential constituent. “It was Ramadan, and I was fasting,” Syed, a devout Muslim, recalls. “I fainted on someone’s doorstep!”

All that effort paid off, though. In November, the Palatine native defeated a Republican incumbent to become the first Indian American and Muslim woman elected to the state legislature—and, at age 23, one of its youngest members ever. Syed now represents Illinois’s 51st District, which includes northwest suburbs from Inverness to Lake Zurich.

In 2021, a few months before graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, Syed drove to Georgia with her friend Anusha Thotakura to mobilize Asian American voters to support Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff in the runoff that gave Democrats control of the U.S. Senate. Then, in April of that year, they helped a friend win a local school board election. “I didn’t want to stop,” Syed recalls. “Initially, I thought, Whose campaign can I help next?” Thotakura had a surprising answer: her own.

That fall, as Syed recovered from donating part of her liver to an acquaintance’s brother, the two women determined that victory was possible in the redrawn 51st District. Syed leveraged her knack for connecting with people—even those skeptical of a hijab-wearing young Democrat—by going door to door in neighborhoods and listening. “So many people told Nabeela they never had someone running for office come to their home before,” says Thotakura, who served as her campaign manager.

In Springfield, Syed plans to focus on such issues as gun violence, the environment, and the cost of prescription drugs. As for her future goals—D.C., perhaps?—she says, “Truthfully, I do not know. It’s funny, because I think other people have big plans for me. I’m like, whoa—I’m too excited about being a state rep right now.”
–WEB BEHRENS | 📷 C.H.

THE SHOWMAN

LIAM KAZAR

“Everybody’s asking me, ‘What you gonna do, gonna be?’” Liam Kazar sings on his mind-blowingly good 2021 debut album, *Due North*. “I couldn’t tell you if I tried; I’m just a poem with an open line.”

The 29-year-old singer-songwriter from Albany Park has since answered his own question: He’s one of Chicago’s most promising musicians. After the release of that album—which feels like a next-door neighbor to Bob Dylan and David Bowie and was dubbed a “fully formed, fleshed-out ace debut” by the online music magazine Aquarium Drunkard—Kazar’s profile has steadily risen. Last year, he shared the stage with indie rockers the New Pornographers on the West Coast, toured Europe with Kevin Morby, and opened for Grammy winner Lucinda Williams before doing a sold-out show of his own at the Hungry Brain in Roscoe Village.

Jeff Tweedy has said that Kazar knows how to perform “a magic trick very few people can pull off: making something brand new sound like a cherished memory.” The Wilco frontman has been familiar with those sounds longer than most. Since Kazar was 12, he has collaborated with Tweedy’s son Spencer, including handling bass duties in the father-son collaboration appropriately named Tweedy. He was also a member (as Liam Cunningham, his birth name) of Kids These Days, whose debut album was produced by Jeff Tweedy, and its spinoff band Marrow.

But going solo hasn’t been simple. When the pandemic halted the live music business while Kazar was recording *Due North*, he pivoted temporarily, opening a pop-up Armenian and Persian restaurant. “Now I sort of do it when I can and when I want to,” he says. “Music is luckily giving me plenty of work.”

Luck, though, isn’t the driving force behind Kazar’s climb. Soft-spoken and meticulous in his craft, he is focused on finishing a follow-up album that he calls “a tiptoe towards melodrama [with] lots of heart-on-the-sleeve moments.” That sounds like the best kind of magic trick—one that keeps the audience guessing what’s next. –DAVID McMILLIN | 📷 C.H.

“Music is luckily giving me plenty of work,” says Liam Kazar, who dabbled with a restaurant while recording his first solo album.

“I was burned out,” Morimoto says of her old job. “When I quit, I learned to take care of myself. And through serendipity, I found how to share that with others.”

"I want to see more people like me win," says Neri.

THE POLITICAL CONNECTOR

JORGE NERI

"When I was in high school, my mom was incarcerated, and my family lost everything," says Jorge Neri, choking back tears. "I had to quit sports and get a job." Just a decade later, he landed a role in the Obama administration as the primary liaison to the Latino community. "I went from the lowest point in my life to working in the most powerful building in the world."

Now a sought-after political consultant, Neri, 36, credits his tough upbringing in Little Village with making him an early achiever. A Mexican immigrant raised by a single mother, he grew up in a home that didn't always have heat, and when the family's water was shut off, he had to shower at school. "Little Village shaped my entire mentality to hustle, to survive and ask, 'What am I doing to move forward?' "

After the White House, Neri joined Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign as its Nevada director, not just helping her win that state but also helping Democrats flip the Nevada Legislature and elect the first Latina to serve in the U.S. Senate. And in 2020, a year after returning to Chicago to work on Bill Daley's mayoral campaign, he landed his highest-profile assignment yet, serving as a senior adviser for Joe Biden's presidential campaign and later the Biden-Harris transition team—all from his basement in Oak Park.

These days, Neri is one of Chicago's most influential connections to D.C. And while he has national ambitions—he wants to bolster efforts to pass immigration reform—he's just as focused on his hometown, where he spent this winter as a self-described "supervolunteer" for Jesús "Chuy" García's mayoral campaign. "I want to help push people to the next level," Neri says. "I want to see more people like me win." –XIMENA N. BELTRAN QUAN KIU | 📷 N.A.

THE WELLNESS WONDER

STEPHANIE MORIMOTO

Stephanie Morimoto is about to get on a plane to New York City, where she'll appear live on QVC selling pain relief spray and cream. "The only other times I did this were over Skype," she says. "I can't believe I'm actually going to be in the studio."

Not long ago, the Lake View resident, 45, was in just the kind of pain that her wellness brand, Asutra, strives to soothe. She was working a stressful job in nonprofit fundraising that left her little time to do the things she loved: tending to her garden, going for a jog, and hanging out with her husband. "I was burned out," she says. "When I quit, I learned to take care of myself. And through serendipity, I found how to share that with others."

That serendipity was the opportunity to purchase Asutra in 2018. Its all-natural wellness products, primarily devoted to alleviating pain and getting good sleep, had long been Morimoto's favorites. Now they're Oprah's, too. Sales of Asutra's silk eye pillow increased eightfold when it made O's favorite things list last year. And Venus Williams thinks so much of the products that she has come on board as a part owner and chief brand officer.

Since taking over, Morimoto, who runs the 11-person operation from an office on the Northwest Side, has accelerated a business that previously worked exclusively online. These days, key products like magnesium body butters and sprays are sold nationally at Target. And the company's distribution has grown from zero to 6,300 stores, with more on the way: Asutra will be sold in select Walgreens locations beginning at the end of March.

It's a heady time for Morimoto, who received the industry publication *Beauty Independent*'s 2021 Beacon Award for entrepreneurship. But she always finds a moment to take a breath. –KELLY AIGLON | 📷 C.H.

THE DEBUT NOVELIST

TOYA WOLFE

On a winter evening, writer Toya Wolfe is at Soho House, sipping a glass of club soda and laughing heartily as she relaxes on a red velvet chair. She breaks out an upper-crust British accent to match the tony atmosphere. Perhaps it's no surprise that she's a former pastor; Wolfe, 42, possesses the requisite charisma to enthrall a congregation.

She has plenty of cause for joy these days. Wolfe's debut novel, *Last Summer on State Street*, was published last June to critical praise. Set in 1999, the story follows a 12-year-old girl and her friends coming of age in the Robert Taylor Homes, where Wolfe grew up, during the final summer before the Bronzeville public housing complex was demolished. The *New York Times* called the novel "a remarkable achievement," and NBA star Stephen Curry picked it for his online book club, Underrated.

Wolfe, who now lives on the North Shore, has adapted the novel into a TV script that's being circulated in Hollywood and has also started her second book—all while remotely teaching in the graduate writing program at Bennington College.

It's just the latest chapter of an interesting career arc. Although Wolfe has loved writing since childhood, she attended seminary in Michigan in 2009 and ministered at a Seventh-day Adventist church in Southern California from 2011 to 2013. She moved back to Chicago to be near family after several relatives died. Leaving California hurt, but Wolfe promised herself she would pursue an MFA upon her return. She'd had the idea—and some pages—for *Last Summer* since 2005, so she entered the graduate creative writing program at Columbia College with a mission: finish the book.

"Even when it sounds crazy or you feel like it's a demotion, I really think you have to follow what you think God's telling you to do," she says. "You just gotta go." –NNEKA McGUIRE | 📷 N.A.

THE ALTRUISTIC ADMAN

SAM SHEPHERD

The old saying about advertising is that it's where artists go to sell out. So it's a little odd to hear Sam Shepherd, global executive creative director of Leo Burnett, talk about advertising as a place where creative people can advocate for human rights. "If you're talented," he says, "why wouldn't you use those talents for something good?"

Shepherd, 36, most recently garnered accolades for "The Lost Class," made for Change the Ref, a gun reform nonprofit founded by the parents of a student killed in the 2018 Parkland shooting. The TV spot captures former National Rifle Association president David Keene speaking at an outdoor graduation ceremony, only for the cameras to pan back and show 3,044 empty chairs, representing the number of Americans who would have matriculated from high school in 2021 had they not fallen victim to gun violence. Shepherd and his colleagues collaborated with Sacha Baron Cohen's team to create phony emails, phone numbers, and a website to trick Keene into thinking he was rehearsing a speech for a real graduation. The ad swept most of the major industry awards and was nominated for an Emmy.

When Shepherd was 14, the Algonquin native submitted, in his words, "the saddest application ever" for Leo Burnett's internship program. He finally got hired 20 years later, returning to Chicago in 2020 after nearly a decade cutting his teeth at New York agencies, where he won awards for campaigns he crafted for HBO and Krylon. In only two years with Leo Burnett, he's already been named the world's top executive creative director by industry trackers D&AD and One Club for Creativity.

What's next? Leo Burnett has handed him the keys to Kellogg's. And he's working on a new spot for Change the Ref. "This one is equally as ambitious," he says, "but I'm gonna keep it quiet until it hits."

–TAL ROSENBERG | 📷 C.H.

By Edward Robert McClelland

Illustration by Harry Campbell

THE MYSTERY MILLIONAIRE OF GAGE PARK

When Joseph Stancak died, he left behind a secret: He was worth $11 million. How did a reclusive electrician living in a modest bungalow amass the largest unclaimed estate in American history?

THE MAIL BEGAN PILING UP

outside a brick bungalow on South Troy Street the week before Christmas in 2016. An 87-year-old man lived inside, alone. Everyone on the block knew Joseph Stancak, the slight figure pushing his two-wheeled shopping cart to Pete's Fresh Market on Kedzie, walking down the street with his hands clasped behind his back, or cutting his grass with an old Sunbeam electric mower. As one of the last white holdouts on a Gage Park block that was nearly all Latino, Stancak stood out. His new neighbors looked after his well-being, though, shoveling his walk after a heavy snow.

Stancak as a student at Gage Park High School in 1942

On the morning of Monday, December 19, postal carrier Crystal Hayes noticed that Stancak hadn't brought in his mail from Friday or Saturday. She asked a firefighter who lived a few doors down to check on him. There was no response to the doorbell, so the firefighter called the police, who also got no answer. The mail continued to pile up, and the firefighter called again. When officers returned on Friday, they noticed a strange odor coming from the house, so they called the fire department to request a forced entry. After firefighters broke a window, Stancak's next-door neighbor Jesse Guzman climbed through and unlocked the back door. Guzman knew Stancak as well as anyone but had never been inside his home. There was no heat on, even though the temperature was 37 degrees that day, and no electricity.

An hour later, the officers came by Guzman's garage to report that Stancak was dead. They had found him in the bathtub, wearing a sweater and a jacket.

Stancak had once lived with two older sisters in the 1,600-square-foot house, but Frances died in 2002, and Helen in 2006. He had no wife, no children, no close friends, so no one ever came to call. At the end of Joe Stancak's life, death was his only visitor. Nobody knows exactly when it came, though, or in what guise. On Stancak's death certificate, the date is listed as "found December 23, 2016," and the cause as "hypertensive and arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease," but his neighbors wonder whether living without heat helped do him in.

Guzman returned to Stancak's house a few days later to turn off the water. He walked through his neighbor's kitchen and living room. He saw an old steel sink with legs and a gas range that belonged on the set of a black-and-white sitcom. The couches were upholstered with floral patterns popular in the 1970s. Packages were lying around unopened. Shingles had fallen off the roof, and the wood underneath was rotting, strips of flashing hanging down. Stancak's house had not been updated in decades, and neither had the man himself. He dressed in newsboy caps, windbreakers, Dickies pants, and heavy-soled shoes, "like a picture in the '50s of a blue-collar man," Guzman says. Sometimes he just wore a Shell gas station jumpsuit. Stancak told Guzman he had worked as an electrician.

The police confiscated three long guns, two handguns, a Red Ryder BB gun, 200 rounds of ammunition, and cash amounting to less than $400 from Stancak's house – property that would be auctioned off when the Chicago Police Department could not locate any relatives. It would take nearly five years, though, before all his assets could be accounted for and totaled up. And when they were, their value would turn out to be far greater than any of his neighbors could have imagined for a retired electrician who lived so simply.

Joe Stancak was worth $11 million. He had left behind the largest unclaimed estate in American history.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

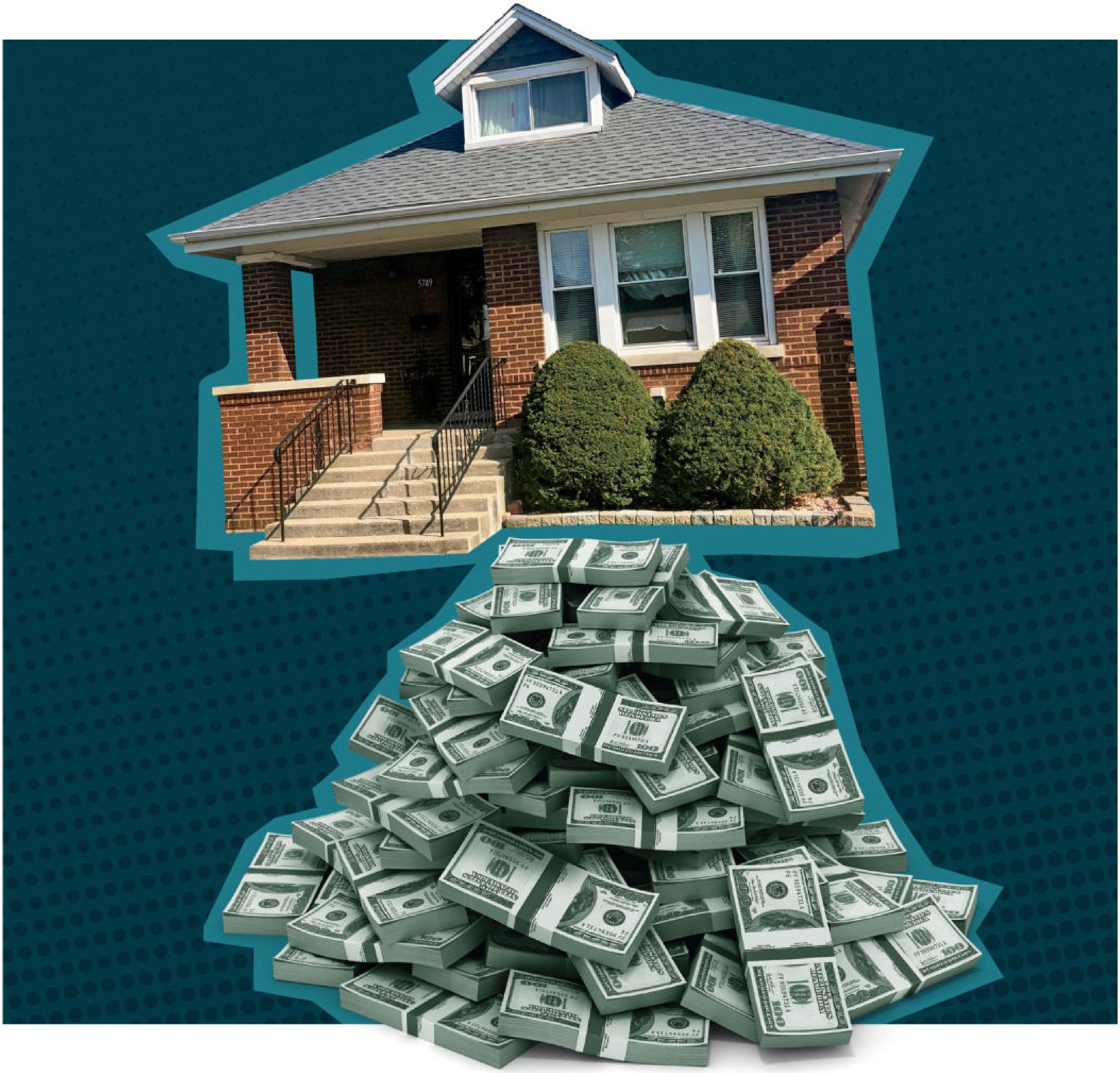


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: (MONEY) ISTOCK; (HOUSE) MITCH DUDEK/*CHICAGO SUN-TIMES*

In late November 2022, a few weeks after he was reelected to a third term as state treasurer, Michael Frerichs sat down at his usual table at Uncle Mike's Place, a Filipino breakfast spot in West Town, to talk about the Stancak case. As the holder of an office whose function is to collect and invest Illinois's money, the state treasurer does not often make headlines. But after Frerichs announced the news of Stancak's fortune in October, his name appeared in news stories all over the world, from *People* magazine to England's *Daily Mail*.

At the time of Stancak's death, though, nobody knew he was sitting on that kind of money, except perhaps Stancak himself. Nobody really knew Stancak at all. As Guzman puts it, "We knew Joe, but we didn't *know* Joe."

By the time reports of his fortune began filtering into the state treasurer's office, Stancak's unclaimed ashes had been buried in a pauper's grave at Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery, his life forgotten by all but a few Troy Street neighbors. Under Illinois's Revised Uniform Unclaimed Property Act, banks are required to report inactive accounts to the state treasurer within three years of "the last indication of interest in the property by the apparent owner"; investment houses have five years.

Stancak had $21,000 in two Bank of America checking accounts, but most of his assets were in mutual funds or individual securities. As the treasurer's office received reports of these accounts, the staff alerted Frerichs that they were dealing with a claim of historic proportions.

Frerichs was thrilled. "I love returning money," he says. "It's like I get to play

Santa Claus 365 days a year.” But in this case, he had no idea who was supposed to receive Stancak’s fortune. In keeping with his private nature, Stancak had never written a will.

Ordinarily in that situation, the money is distributed to immediate family members. Stancak, however, had none. His last surviving sister died in 2006, and there were no nieces or nephews from any of his six siblings to inherit the money.

Finding Stancak’s heirs would require a deeper genealogical dive than the state treasurer’s office was equipped to undertake. A New York City company called Linking Assets, which specializes in such searches, spotted Stancak’s funds on the treasurer’s website and began conducting its own investigation. The company regularly combs through unclaimed property reports, looking for money to return to heirs, who in most cases have no idea they are entitled to an inheritance, and in many cases have never heard of their long-lost benefactor. In exchange, Linking Assets gets a cut of these funds, though the company won’t say how much.

“If there is no estate, we decide whether we want to take the risk in terms of whether it’s worth researching if there’s children, nieces, nephews, or, in this case, cousins,” explains Linking Assets CEO Peter Quinn. “We started researching on our end. We have genealogists on staff, and they’ve been doing this forever.”

Stancak’s case was complicated, since his parents were Polish immigrants. They were both born in the Szepes region, which at the time was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and after immigrating to the United States, they were married at St. Mary’s Assumption Roman Catholic Church in Passaic, New Jersey, in 1909. Following a move to Chicago, Stancak’s father worked on the railroad. To dig into the family history, Quinn hired Utah genealogist Arden White, who specializes in locating missing heirs.

“Generally when research goes ‘over the pond,’ very few countries kept or keep detailed censuses like we have in the U.S.,” White says. “This makes it necessary to identify the specific place of origin in the old country where the family originated and then either work on the ground yourself or hire local researchers to work on the ground to bring the family forward in time, conduct interviews, then additional research until the entire family has been identified.”

In this case, it was necessary to enlist researchers in Poland to comb through birth and death certificates, baptismal records, and marriage licenses, as well as to contact distant relatives as they were identified to inquire about additional family members. White spent two years searching for Stancak’s heirs, ultimately identifying 119 cousins – once, twice, and three times removed. His research produced a genealogical chart covering a scroll 21 feet, 8 inches long.

“As you talk to more heirs, you find out, oh, there was another branch,” Quinn says. “So you make sure you’ve done your due diligence to make sure you capture everyone. You know, someone knew about another cousin who lived over here.” Of the 119 heirs, 76 live in Poland, Slovakia, or the Czech Republic. Only 16 are in the United States – seven in the Chicago area.

Had Linking Assets not spotted the unclaimed property notice and tracked down Stancak’s heirs, his money might have remained with the treasurer’s office in perpetuity, awaiting a claimant. “The state would not have gone to the expense of hiring a genealogist in Poland,” says Allen Mayer, Frerichs’s chief of staff.

So just how does a never-married electrician from the Bungalow Belt with only a junior college education amass an $11 million fortune? No one knows for sure, but plenty of people involved in his case have theories. The easiest answer is that he didn’t spend much – he had no dependents, lived in an old house where for many years he shared expenses with his sisters, wore old clothes, drove an old car.

“What are three words that profile the affluent? FRUGAL FRUGAL FRUGAL,”

“I love returning money,” says Illinois treasurer Michael Frerichs, whose office received reports of Stancak’s assets from various financial institutions.

“As you talk to more heirs, you find out, oh, there was another branch,” says Peter Quinn, CEO of Linking Assets, which enlisted researchers in Poland to track down Stancak’s distant relatives.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (FRERICHS) TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*; (QUINN) LINKING ASSETS

wrote Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko in their 1996 bestseller *The Millionaire Next Door: The Surprising Secrets of America's Wealthy*. "Being frugal is the cornerstone of wealth-building."

Joe Stancak was frugal, almost to the point of miserliness. Although he allowed himself a few luxuries – a 38-foot pleasure boat named *Easy* (it was an old boat, launched in 1973) and frequent vacations in Hawaii – he was, in his day-to-day life, as penny-pinching as any pensioner on a fixed income. "He was a big saver," says Mayer.

Stancak drove a 1985 Oldsmobile Ninety-Eight. That was a luxury sedan when he bought it, but in its latter days, the neighbors always knew when he was coming home, because they heard his car clanking down the alley and saw smoke seeping from the diesel engine. Joe Malec, another old white holdout on Troy Street, describes Stancak's spending habits more bluntly: "He was cheap."

Malec once drove with Stancak to renew his driver's license at the secretary of state facility in Bridgeview. The Oldsmobile broke down in the parking lot. At first, Stancak refused to pay $10 for a jump from the gas station across the street.

"I'm not sittin' here in a broken-down car!" Malec shouted at him. Stancak finally relented.

But Stancak's frugality alone doesn't account for the fortune he accumulated. He also invested, which can turn a little money into a lot over the course of a lifetime. For example: Had he put even $100 a month into a S&P 500 index fund starting in 1959, when he was 30, until the age of 65, that investment alone would be worth more than $3.8 million today.

Stancak lived his entire life in Gage Park. He spent his childhood on South Artesian Avenue. In the 1940s, he attended Gage Park High School and then Chicago Vocational School, where he was a member of the National Honor Society and managed the wrestling team. After high school, he earned a radio operator's license at Woodrow Wilson Junior College in Englewood (now Kennedy-King College). Radios became a lifelong interest for Stancak, who repaired them in his basement workshop.

Some of his brothers and sisters moved to the suburbs, but he refused to join the white flight that transformed the neighborhood from Polish and Irish to Latino. Why move when the house was paid for? He was especially proud of his yard, hunching over to pull weeds, picking raspberries from his bush to freeze for the winter, yelling "Not my grass!" at neighbor boys when their soccer ball skipped across his yard. One of them, Adan Lara, now an adult, thought of Stancak as "the grumpy old white guy."

"He wasn't a social man," Guzman says of his next-door neighbor. "He would sit outside in the backyard in his lawn chair when the house was hot. I never saw any air conditioners in the window."

Despite Stancak's solitary nature, Guzman got a few words out of him from time to time. Stancak would stop by Jesse's garage and talk, Guzman recalls, "about modern times and how the neighborhood was changing. Nothing personal. He wasn't very verbal." Other times it would be Guzman popping into Stancak's garage to help the old man start the Oldsmobile. They had only one source of conflict: Stancak was a vegetarian whose idea of supper was spooning peas and corn out of cans, so he'd scold Guzman for grilling meat in his backyard.

"No, that's no good," he'd say. "You got to eat vegetables."

"OK, Joe," Guzman would respond, humoring another of his neighbor's eccentricities.

In the last year of Stancak's life, the Oldsmobile stayed in the garage. It was too decrepit to be driven, and Stancak was too tired to fix it. He became so frail that Guzman helped him mow his lawn. "He was an independent man," Guzman recalls. "He never asked anybody for any help. He never disclosed he had no problems. If we had known he didn't have any heat, we would have helped him."

But it wasn't in Stancak's nature to be forthcoming – about the heat or his money. Vytenis Lietuvninkas, a West Lawn attorney who did some legal work for Stancak's family in the 1990s,

At the time of Stancak's death, nobody knew he was sitting on that kind of money, except perhaps Stancak himself. Nobody really knew Stancak at all. As his neighbor Jesse Guzman puts it, "We knew Joe, but we didn't *know* Joe."

ILLUSTRATION: HARRY CAMPBELL

speculates that, as the last survivor of seven childless siblings, Stancak may have built his fortune through inheritance. Lietuvninkas helped Stancak administer the estate of his sister Ann McCormick. “My assumption is they all inherited from one another. Being the last one standing, he got everything,” Lietuvninkas says. “Those people who never married, don’t have kids, typically do very good.”

According to the state treasurer’s office, $8.1 million of Stancak’s $11 million was in securities, including one mutual fund account worth $3.8 million. The rest was mostly in uncashed dividends and savings. (There were also much smaller assets, including a $15 bank refund and a $49.94 rebate from a mail-order company.) In all, the state received reports from eight different financial institutions, but it’s not allowed to disclose where Stancak invested his money, or in what stocks. Even in death, Joe Stancak remains a mystery.

Probate attorney Kenneth Piercey has devoted more than 200 hours to the Stancak case, the most time-consuming of his 12-year career.

No one was more astonished than Jesse Guzman, who found out about his neighbor’s wealth from an online article. “I was speechless,” he recalls. “I had no words. He could have been living in Hawaii.”

Anna Madeja has never been rich, never had more than just enough for her and her husband to buy a bungalow in Garfield Ridge for $255,000 in 2004. Madeja was born in Zakopane, a small town in southern Poland not far from the region from which Stancak’s parents had emigrated. She came to Chicago in 1994, when she was 28. Like many Polish immigrants, she found work cleaning houses. After several years of returning periodically to Poland, Anna moved to Chicago for good in 2003, eventually bringing over her mother, Helena, a seamstress, in 2021. Anna’s brothers, Tadeusz and Franciszek Soltys, also moved here, Tadeusz to work as a butcher, Franciszek in construction.

The siblings all settled in or around Garfield Ridge, a historically Polish neighborhood on the Southwest Side. Anna and Franciszek live in bungalows on the same block of Narragansett Avenue; Tadeusz lives nearby, in an apartment in Clearing. They have built lives in this country by doing blue-collar jobs that don’t require command of the English language. They live less than five miles due west of Stancak’s house but had no idea he existed – not until they received letters informing them they were entitled to a share of his fortune.

Stancak, as it turns out, was their first cousin once removed. Their father, Ludwik Soltys, was the son of Anna Kapolka, a sister of Stancak’s mother, Veronica.

When I ring the doorbell of Anna Madeja’s bungalow, her 30-year-old daughter, Maggie, answers and steps outside to translate questions and responses. Maggie, who grew up in Garfield Ridge and graduated from John F. Kennedy High School, also read and answered the letters from Linking Assets.

Had Anna ever heard of Joe Stancak before this? *“Nie!”* she exclaims, shaking her head vigorously, a gesture that transcends language barriers. Anna’s mother, who was still living in Poland when Linking Assets began its work, was the first to hear from one of the firm’s researchers. “He was reaching out, and he was asking who else was related,” Maggie explains. Anna’s mother told him about her children in the United States.

The siblings “haven’t really discussed the money situation,” Maggie says, because they don’t yet know how much they’ll be getting, or when they’ll be getting it, but if it’s enough, Anna would like to pay off her mortgage and buy a car. “She says, ‘I would be happy with $500,’ because she knows there’s a lot of people,” Maggie says, translating.

Anna, Tadeusz, and Franciszek will be getting much more than that. Stancak’s $11 million fortune will amount to around $7.65 million after estate taxes are deducted. But his estate may have to settle first with the Internal Revenue Service, since he does not appear to have filed a tax return the last three years of his life. And there will be money deducted for accounting, legal, and genealogical research fees.

What’s left will not be divided equally among Stancak’s 119 cousins, according to Kenneth Piercey, a Barrington probate attorney retained

Stancak's heir Anna Madeja (right) and her mother, Helena

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENA NALTSAS

Anna Madeja and her brothers live less than five miles due west of Stancak's house but had no idea he existed—not until they received letters informing them they were entitled to a share of his fortune.

by Linking Assets to represent the interests of the heirs. Inheritance law is governed per stirpes (Latin for "by familial stocks"), which assigns payouts according to the number of descendants in each heir's line. Since the Soltys siblings are among seven living grandchildren of one of Stancak's aunts, their share is less than 1 percent each. Each will get a check in the low- to mid-five figures: not necessarily enough to pay off a mortgage, but definitely enough to buy a car. One heir who has a bloodline to himself will get close to 5 percent of the inheritance, which could amount to more than $300,000.

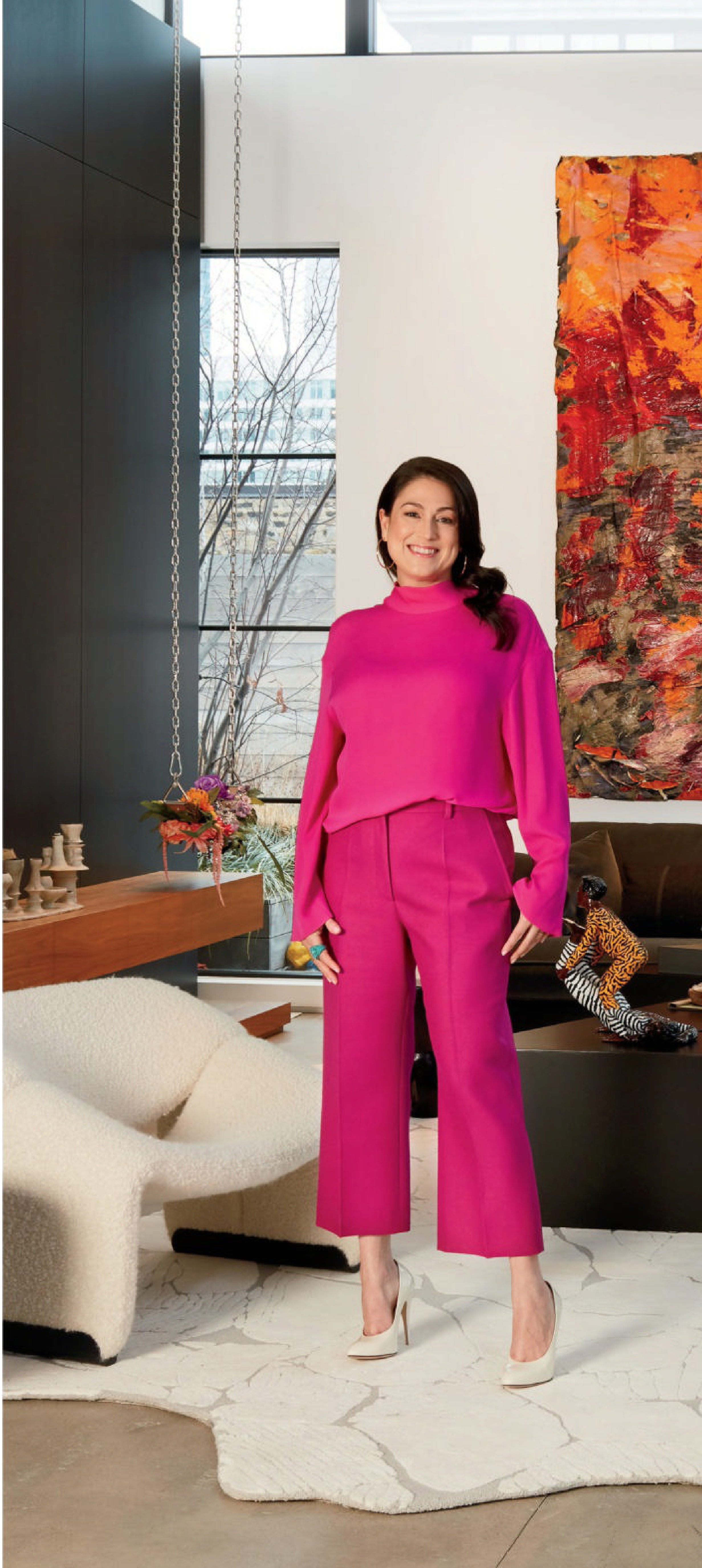
Under the laws regarding intestate inheritance, blood counts for everything. Distant cousins in foreign lands who have never heard of Joe Stancak will get life-changing money, while the Troy Street neighbors who looked after him in his dotage will get nothing. Stancak could have changed that by drawing up a will, but he may not

(Continued on page 90)

Arbiters of ART

Some of the city's top gallerists and museum curators showcase new looks for the new season.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AKIN GIRAV
STYLING BY JESSICA MOAZAMI
TEXT BY JACK McGANN



JESSICA MOSS and KAVI GUPTA AT THEIR WEST LOOP HOME WITH ANGEL OTERO'S *EVERYTHING AND NOTHING* AND A COMMISSIONED SOUNDSUIT BY NICK CAVE

On Moss: Valentino silk blouse, $2,200, Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan Ave. Valentino wool and silk trousers, $1,695, Ikram, 15 E. Huron St. Gucci patent leather pumps, $175 for four-day rental, Janet Mandell, 900 N. Michigan Ave. *On Gupta:* Homme Plissé Issey Miyake pleated polyester zip hoodie, $440, and trousers, $340, us-store.isseymiyake.com. Woven leather sneakers, $125, Marc Nolan, 169 N. Sangamon St.

Nick Cave
UNTIL

Myriam Ben Salah

A Tunisian curator and editor working in Paris, Ben Salah had never been to Chicago when the Renaissance Society approached her in 2020 about being its director and chief curator, but she was drawn by the boundary-pushing reputation of the small museum on the University of Chicago campus. Since taking over, she has furthered that sensibility with exhibitions like last year's film by Meriem Bennani about a fictional island in a dystopian future. "Trusting the artists we invite is crucial," Ben Salah says. "We give them the possibility to take risks, to make a mess, and to figure things out."

Kavi Gupta and Jessica Moss

Gupta, the son of Indian immigrants, opened the first of two West Loop locations of his namesake gallery in 2000. Moss, his wife since 2008 and a former curator at the Smart Museum of Art, serves as the gallery's head of exhibitions. The couple, who showcase contemporary artists at a dozen or so shows a year here and at fairs around the world, are credited with building a posthumous international following for Chicago imagist painter Roger Brown. They put a priority on diverse and underrepresented talent, from established names like Mickalene Thomas to up-and-comers such as Devan Shimoyama.

Mariane Ibrahim

The French Somali spent her early career in marketing in the U.K., but she dabbled in art collecting. And in 2012, after moving to Seattle, she opened a gallery there, M.I.A., focused on African and African diaspora artists, repping future stars such as Amoako Boafo and Clotilde Jiménez. In 2019, feeling it was time to relocate and grow, she took inspiration from Barack Obama's formative period and moved here, opening Mariane Ibrahim Gallery in West Town: "We often say New York is a place that makes people. I was thinking it's actually Chicago."

Aron Gent and Sibylle Friche

After studying photography at Columbia College Chicago, Gent founded Document in 2012 as a studio and exhibition space. Friche arrived in 2015, bringing a master's in arts administration and curating experience at Expo Chicago and Rhona Hoffman Gallery. Together, the business partners upped the gallery's commercial efforts, with Gent focusing on printmaking and fabricating work, and Friche spearheading programming. Their edgy roster includes Maine sculptor Elizabeth Atterbury and Chicago photographer Laura Letinsky.

Louise Bernard

With a doctorate from Yale in African American studies and a leadership role in developing the Smithsonian's lauded National Museum of African American History and Culture under her belt, Bernard was a natural to be tapped in 2017 to direct the museum of the Obama Presidential Center, now under construction in Jackson Park. Part of her mission: include local artists in the project. (Englewood-raised Richard Hunt has already been commissioned to create a sculpture for the reading garden.) "We think about how we are bringing the world to the South Side, and the South Side to the world," Bernard says.

“WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT CHICAGO IS ITS HUMILITY. BECAUSE IT IS SLIGHTLY OFF CENTER, IT ALLOWS FOR MORE INTERESTING THINGS TO HAPPEN.”

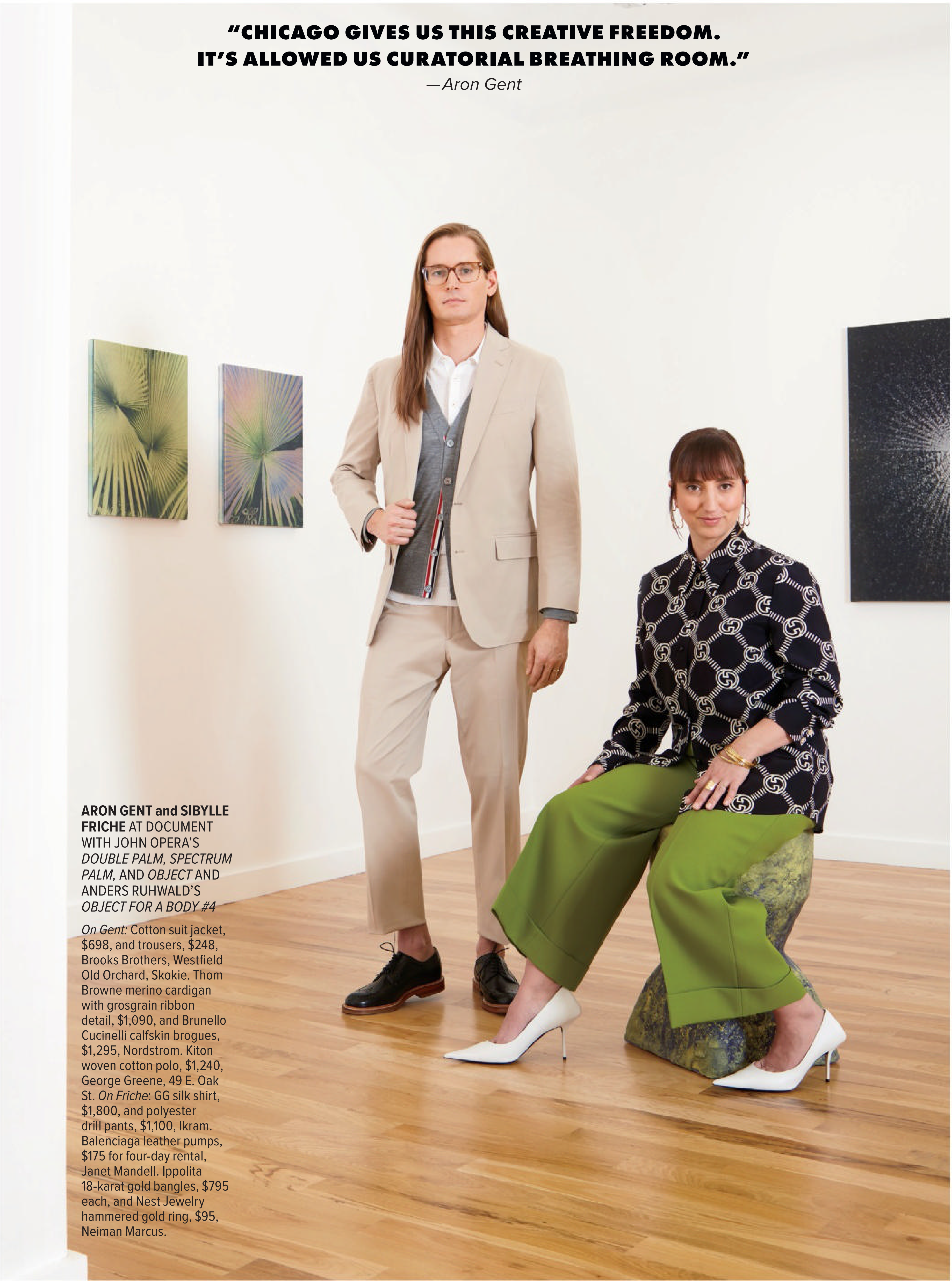
MYRIAM BEN SALAH AT THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY WITH MAX GUY’S INSTALLATION *BUT TELL ME, IS IT A CIVILIZED COUNTRY?*

Sacai Thomas Mason cotton poplin dress, $995, and Gucci viscose trousers, $980, Ikram. Patent leather slingback pumps, $1,200, Prada, 30 E. Oak St.

MARIANE IBRAHIM
AT MARIANE IBRAHIM GALLERY WITH AMOAKO BOAFO'S *VANDYKE BROWN ZIP*

J'Adior 8 cashmere sweater, $2,350, cotton poplin blouse, $1,350, wool and silk trousers, $1,650, and D-Renaissance choker with resin pearls and gold-finish metal, $850, Dior, 931 E. Rush St. Nest Jewelry multistrand silver bracelet, $195, Neiman Marcus. Dior embroidered mesh and suede ankle boots, $1,490, Nordstrom, 55 E. Grand Ave.

“MY FOCUS IS TO PRESENT ARTISTS OF MY GENERATION THAT HAVE VISUAL TRANSLATION OF THEIR REALITY.”



“CHICAGO GIVES US THIS CREATIVE FREEDOM. IT’S ALLOWED US CURATORIAL BREATHING ROOM.”

—Aron Gent

ARON GENT and SIBYLLE FRICHE AT DOCUMENT WITH JOHN OPERA’S *DOUBLE PALM, SPECTRUM PALM,* AND *OBJECT* AND ANDERS RUHWALD’S *OBJECT FOR A BODY #4*

On Gent: Cotton suit jacket, $698, and trousers, $248, Brooks Brothers, Westfield Old Orchard, Skokie. Thom Browne merino cardigan with grosgrain ribbon detail, $1,090, and Brunello Cucinelli calfskin brogues, $1,295, Nordstrom. Kiton woven cotton polo, $1,240, George Greene, 49 E. Oak St. *On Friche*: GG silk shirt, $1,800, and polyester drill pants, $1,100, Ikram. Balenciaga leather pumps, $175 for four-day rental, Janet Mandell. Ippolita 18-karat gold bangles, $795 each, and Nest Jewelry hammered gold ring, $95, Neiman Marcus.

GROOMING: (HAIR) FRANCES TSALAS/OPTION 1 MODELS; (MAKEUP) JAKE BROULLARD/DISTINCT ARTISTS

THE WOMAN'S GRAND STAIRCASE

LOUISE BERNARD AT THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO WITH RICHARD HUNT'S *HERO CONSTRUCTION*

Prada belted wool dress, $300 for four-day rental, Janet Mandell. Miss Button leather brogues, $550, theofficeofangelascott.com. Marni metal and plastic brooch, $230, Ikram.

Breathe EASY

WHETHER YOU HAVE ALLERGIES OR A LUNG CONDITION, YOU CAN TURN TO ONE OF THESE **80 DOCTORS**, NOMINATED BY THEIR PEERS AS THE BEST FOR TREATING RESPIRATORY ISSUES.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STUART BRIERS

VC
VT

Allergy & Immunology

Daryn Abraham
Allergy, asthma. *Northwestern Central DuPage, Winfield. 630-668-9610*

Priya J. Bansal
Asthma, allergy. *Northwestern Central DuPage, Winfield. 630-584-6127*

David Scott Chudwin
Asthma. *NorthShore Highland Park. 847-272-4296*

Christina E. Ciaccio
Asthma, allergy, food allergy, angioedema, immunodeficiency. *UChicago Comer. 773-702-6169*

Paul Detjen
Asthma. *NorthShore Evanston. 847-256-5505*

Aaron Donnell
Asthma, allergy. *Advocate Masonic. 773-388-2322*

Sol Drapkin
Asthma, allergy. *Advocate Lutheran General, Park Ridge. 847-635-7300*

Baltazar Espiritu
Asthma, allergy, autoimmune disease. *Loyola, Maywood. 888-584-7888*

Colin D. Freccia
Asthma, allergy. *Advocate Lutheran General, Park Ridge. 773-883-0274*

Uma D. Gavani
Asthma, allergy. *Advocate Christ, Oak Lawn. 708-636-9611*

Leslie C. Grammer
Asthma. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-8624*

Steve W. Handoyo
Pediatric asthma, allergy, eczema, food allergy. *UChicago Comer. 773-702-6169*

W. Mona Hirani
Asthma, allergy. *Advocate Lutheran General, Park Ridge. 847-635-7300*

Mark C. Jacobson
Asthma, sinusitis, chronic cough. *UChicago AdventHealth Hinsdale. 630-455-0456*

Mark Kaplan
Asthma, chronic cough. *Northwestern Lake Forest. 847-855-1570*

Paul M. Kentor
Asthma. *NorthShore Evanston. 847-864-0810*

Joel S. Klein
Asthma. *Advocate Lutheran General, Park Ridge. 847-432-0200*

Jeffrey J. Kulik
Allergy, asthma, chronic cough. *Elmhurst Hospital. 331-221-9001*

Renee Lantner
Asthma. *Western Springs. 708-246-4515*

➜ Note: Hospitals are located in Chicago unless otherwise noted.

ONE THING PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE ABOUT ...

ALLERGIES

You can develop them later in life.

People often assume that reactions show up the first time you are introduced to a potential trigger. Not always, says Northwestern Medicine allergist Anju Tripathi Peters: "You may be exposed to a cat growing up and not be allergic." The same could happen with medication or food. "Some things your body gets sensitized to, and then going forward you may have a life-threatening reaction. You could be eating something like shrimp your whole life, and then all of a sudden you develop an allergy to it." –ALISON BOWEN

John G. Latall
Asthma, allergy. *Advocate Masonic. 773-665-4016*

Mark Lowenthal
Asthma. *Advocate Good Shepherd, Barrington. 847-433-7660*

Kris G. McGrath
Allergy testing. *Ascension St. Joseph Chicago. 312-222-9500*

Kelly Newhall
Asthma, allergy. *Advocate Masonic. 773-388-2322*

Irma M. Oliff
Asthma, sinusitis. *NorthShore Skokie. 847-272-4296*

Diane L. Ozog
Asthma. *Edward, Naperville. 630-652-0606*

Payal D. Patel
Asthma, allergy. *Rush. 312-942-6296*

Anju Tripathi Peters
Asthma. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-8624*

Alan Resnick
Asthma, sinus disorders, allergic rhinitis. *Highland Park. 847-433-7660*

Wendell Richmond
Immune deficiency, asthma. *Rush. 630-724-1300*

Bradley R. Sabin
Asthma. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-922-3815*

Carol Saltoun
Asthma. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-8624*

Ewa H. Schafer
Asthma, allergy. *NorthShore HealthSystem, Glenview. 847-998-4170*

Kathy R. Sonenthal
Asthma. *NorthShore Highland Park. 847-793-0777*

Rachel E. Story
Asthma, allergy, immune deficiency. *NorthShore HealthSystem, Glenview. 847-998-4170*

Pediatric Allergy & Immunology

Cynthia Lerner
Asthma. *Lurie. 708-633-7001*

C. Lucy Park
Asthma, immune deficiency. *UI Health. 312-996-7416*

Joyce Rabbat
Asthma, allergy. *Loyola, Maywood. 888-584-7888*

Pisit Rangsithienchai
Asthma, allergy. *Advocate Christ, Oak Lawn. 708-687-7550*

Pulmonary Disease

Stephen R. Amesbury
Asthma, COPD. *Advocate Condell, Libertyville. 847-367-5209*

Ada I. Arias
Sleep medicine, asthma, critical care. *Ascension St. Elizabeth. 773-342-5781*

Remzi Bag
Lung transplant, pulmonary hypertension, pulmonary vascular disease, hepatopulmonary syndrome. *UChicago. 773-702-9660*

ONE THING PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE ABOUT ...

ASTHMA

Your perfume may be triggering it.

Agop Tepeli, a pulmonologist at Advocate South Suburban Hospital in Hazel Crest, says many of his patients have no idea that the chemicals in their—or even their partner's—cologne, perfume, or aftershave could provoke an asthma attack. Sometimes when he walks into a patient's hospital room, it's filled with a strong scent, and he has to tell the patient to lose the fragrance they're wearing. "They are surprised, and some get offended," he says. "The way I put it: 'You smell nice, but it's not good for you.' " –A.B.

ONE THING PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE ABOUT …

LUNG CANCER

You don't have to be a smoker or old to get it.

Prema Nanavaty, a Rush University Medical Center pulmonologist, has seen it many times: 20- and 30-somethings holding off on geting a persistent cough examined, assuming it must be a respiratory infection or allergies. After all, they reason, they aren't smokers; they don't have a family history of lung cancer. "It's often six months to a year before they come in—not until it's interfering with their daily life, or a family member is like, 'You need to get this checked out,'" Nanavaty says. When the CT scan shows white spots in the lung, "that's always a shock. They're like, 'I just had a baby—why is this happening?'" –A.B.

Robert A. Balk
Asthma, cystic fibrosis, respiratory failure, lung injury, ARDS. *Rush. 312-942-6744*

Carl M. Barsanti
Sleep medicine, critical care. *Advocate Good Samaritan, Downers Grove. 630-932-2040*

Michael J. Cuttica
COPD, pulmonary hypertension, critical care. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

Jane E. DeMatte-D'Amico
Autoimmune lung disease, interstitial lung disease. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

Steven Dudek
ARDS. *UI Health. 312-996-2740*

Harvey J. Friedman
Critical care, asthma. *Ascension St. Francis, Evanston. 847-328-1853*

Steven M. Geller
Pulmonary care. *Ascension Alexian Brothers, Elk Grove Village. 847-818-1184*

Robert W. Hart
Sleep medicine, CPAP therapy. *Ascension Alexian Brothers, Elk Grove Village. 847-981-3660*

D. Kyle Hogarth
COPD, bronchoscopy, emphysema. *UChicago. 773-702-9660*

Renea Jablonski
Lung transplant, advanced emphysema, pulmonary fibrosis, interstitial lung disease. *UChicago. 773-702-9660*

Manu Jain
Cystic fibrosis, critical care. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

Min Joo
COPD, asthma, critical care. *UI Health. 312-996-2740*

Ravi Kalhan
Asthma, COPD. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

David W. Kamp
Pulmonary infections, immunologic lung disease, COPD, occupational lung disease. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

Howard M. Katz
Asthma, emphysema, infectious lung disease. *NorthShore HealthSystem, Bannockburn. 847-236-1300*

Kevin L. Kovitz
Interventional pulmonology. *Ascension Alexian Brothers, Elk Grove Village. 847-981-3660*

John P. Kress
Lung disease, critical care, respiratory failure. *UChicago. 773-702-9660*

Thomas E. Liao
Advocate Masonic. 312-423-4200

Gerald Luger
Gottlieb, Melrose Park. 708-450-4557

Benjamin D. Margolis
Lung cancer, asthma. *NorthShore HealthSystem, Bannockburn. 847-236-1300*

Petham P. Muthuswamy
Asthma, sarcoidosis, respiratory failure, pulmonary hypertension. *Jackson Park Hospital. 773-947-7715*

Prema Nanavaty
Critical care, bronchoscopy, pleural disease. *Rush. 312-942-6744*

Edward T. Naureckas
Cystic fibrosis, asthma, COPD. *UChicago. 773-702-9660*

Christopher Sola Olopade
Asthma, COPD, environmental medicine, bronchiectasis. *UChicago. 773-702-9660*

Michelle Prickett
Critical care, cystic fibrosis. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

Sharon Reifler Rosenberg
Asthma, COPD. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

Kevin P. Simpson
Pulmonary fibrosis, asthma. *Loyola, Maywood. 888-584-7888*

Lewis J. Smith
Asthma, COPD. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

Peter H. Sporn
Asthma, interstitial lung disease. *Northwestern Memorial. 312-695-1800*

Arvey M. Stone
Cystic fibrosis, COPD. *Advocate Lutheran General, Park Ridge. 847-759-4770*

Mary E. Strek
COPD, pulmonary fibrosis, asthma, pulmonary hypertension. *UChicago. 773-702-9660*

Agop Tepeli
Advocate South Suburban, Hazel Crest. 708-799-8700

Nidhi S. Undevia
Sleep disorders and sleep apnea, emphysema, COPD, pulmonary infections. *Loyola, Maywood. 888-584-7888*

John M. Walsh
Critical care, asthma. *Ascension St. Joseph Joliet. 815-725-2653*

Christopher J. Winslow
Critical care, COPD. *NorthShore Glenbrook. 847-570-2714*

Pediatric Pulmonology

Javeed Akhter
Chronic lung disease, sleep disorders. *Advocate Children's, Oak Lawn. 708-684-5437*

Maria L. Dowell
Cystic fibrosis. *Lurie. 800-543-7362*

B. Louise Giles
Pediatric asthma, noncystic fibrosis bronchiectasis, chronic lung disease. *UChicago. 773-702-6178*

Susanna A. McColley
Cystic fibrosis, asthma, chronic cough. *Lurie. 312-227-6260*

ONE THING PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE ABOUT …

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

It can strike children of color, too.

A recent study found that 6 to 7 percent of cystic fibrosis sufferers born between 2010 and 2018 were Black and 13 percent were Hispanic. Yet even some health care providers have the misconception that it only strikes white people, says Susanna A. McColley, a pulmonologist at Lurie Children's Hospital: "Black parents tell us over and over that their concerns were dismissed, that they had child protective services called on them because their child wasn't growing." –A.B.

TOP DOCTORS® 2023

ABOUT THIS LIST It was compiled by Castle Connolly, a trusted and credible health care research and information company with more than 25 years of experience researching, reviewing, and selecting Top Doctors. Its mission is to help people find the best health care by connecting them with best-in-class providers. Castle Connolly's physician-led team of researchers follows a rigorous screening process to select top doctors on both the national and regional levels. Its online nomination process is open to all licensed physicians in America. They are able to nominate physicians in any specialty and in any part of the country. Castle Connolly thoroughly vets each nominee's professional qualifications, education, hospital and faculty appointments, research leadership, professional reputation, and disciplinary history. A physician's interpersonal skills are also considered. The Castle Connolly Doctor Directory is the largest network of peer-nominated physicians in the nation. Castle Connolly is part of Everyday Health Group, a recognized leader in patient and provider education, attracting an audience of more than 74 million health consumers and 890,000 practicing U.S. physicians and clinicians to its health and wellness digital properties. Its mission is to drive better clinical and health outcomes through decision-making informed by highly relevant information and analytics. It empowers health care providers and consumers with trusted content and services delivered through Everyday Health Group's world-class brands. For more information, visit castleconnolly.com or everydayhealthgroup.com.

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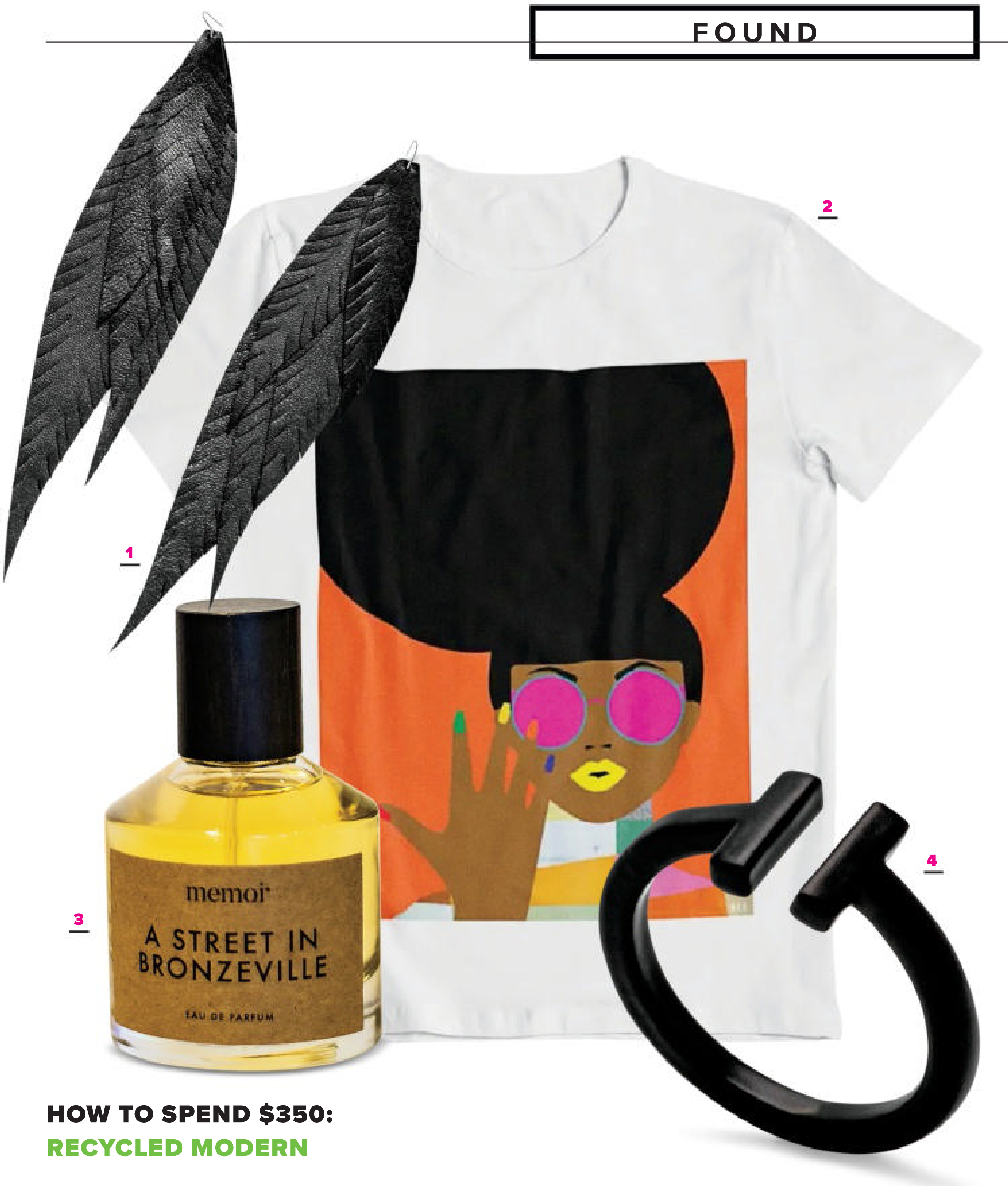
Helium Dreams

Luft Balloons blows up party shopping as you know it.

By KELLY AIGLON

■ When Elaine Frei says she hopes to transform the way you see a balloon, she's not just full of hot air. The Luft Balloons owner opened her first store in December to better showcase her artistic arrangements of everyone's favorite party accent. (Previously, she worked mostly through event planners.) The 100-plus color options are all custom to the shop. For an Instagram-worthy experience, wander to the backroom, where on special occasions you'll find yourself in a balloon box of sorts, with dangling vines, foils, and whatever else Frei dreams up. "This isn't Party City," she says. *1900 W. North Ave., Bucktown*

Photograph by EVAN SHEEHAN



HOW TO SPEND $350:
RECYCLED MODERN

Local Treasures

Part furniture shop, part art gallery, part event lounge, a new Hyde Park spot puts Chicago first. By WEB BEHRENS

IN 2018, SOUTH SIDE NATIVE SHARI CURRIE HAD her own event-planning business but dreamed of something more. Combining a love of vintage home decor and an eye for modern art, she opened Recycled Modern in Lake View, though deep down she knew her shop belonged on the South Side. When Currie, 40, visited an available space in Hyde Park, she felt she'd gotten a sign: "I figured, I don't know where it's going, but I'm gonna follow it, because that's the way the universe works." The new location opened in November, showcasing restored tables, handmade candles, colorful prints, and more from mostly local talent, with an emphasis on Black artists. And because event planning is "still a part of my soul," Currie says, she is always hosting a new experience at the store, from cocktail parties to flash tattoo salons. That's the Recycled Modern ethos: "It's all up in here."

5231 S. Harper Ct., Hyde Park

1 Shake Your Tail Feather earrings by Found Objects, $120
2 Be Eclectic unisex tee by Bee Harris, $32
3 A Street in Bronzeville eau de parfum by Memoir Fragrances, $150
4 Two-T unisex ring by Locked and Layered, $30

THEY LOVE THE '90S

The '80s are so last year. When you want to break out the Starter jackets and big jeans, head to these resale racks. –KELLY AIGLON

The New Kid on the Block

➜ FAD2FRESH
5653 N. Ashland Ave.,
Andersonville

The goods Opened in September, this is collectible tee heaven, complete with a 1996 signed Fugees option.
Nice touch Make-me-wanna-do-the-running-man music, from TLC to NSync, is piped in.
Hot finds Chicago Bulls merch swishes through often.

The In-Vogue Choice

➜ KOKOROKOKO
1323 N. Milwaukee Ave.,
Wicker Park

The goods Fashion-forward styles borrow from '90s hip-hop fashion, skateboarding trends, and club culture.
Nice touch Colorful graphic wall murals give *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* vibes.
Hot finds Gothy-grunge finds—like silver jewelry, leather, and lace—are the new flannel.

The Faraway Nirvana

➜ THE JUNCTURE
114 E. Jefferson St., Joliet

The goods Comfortable sweats, tees, and jeans are for kicking around, old school.
Nice touch Everything is arranged by color for easy shopping.
Hot finds Vintage university sweatshirts answer the current collegiate trend.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (PRODUCTS) RECYCLED MODERN; (FASHION) MELODIE JENG/GETTY IMAGES

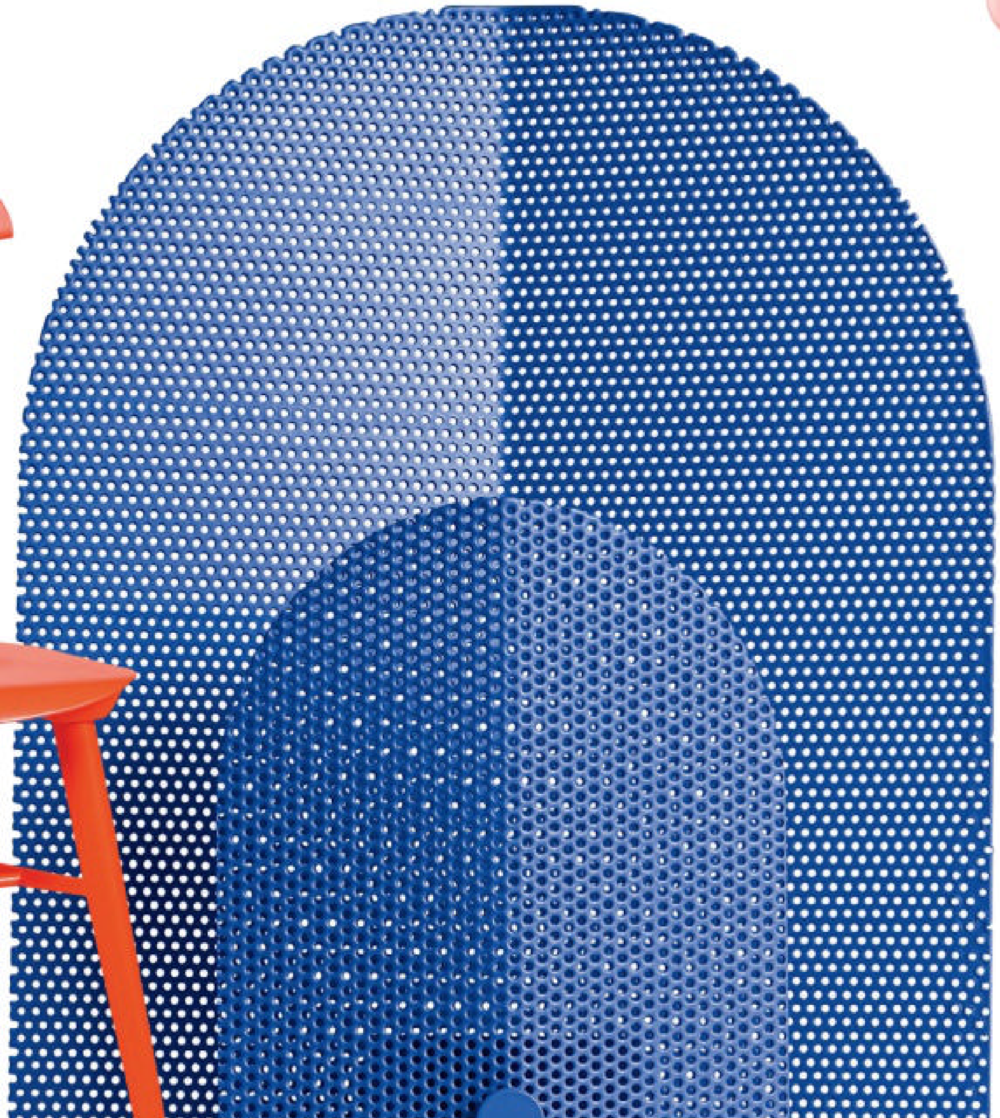
THE GOODS

Spring Awakening

It’s time to bring the bold and bright home.

By JESSICA MOAZAMI

HOT SEAT
Salt beechwood chair by Ton, $262. *Design Within Reach, 755 W. North Ave., Goose Island*



BLUE LIGHT
Filter powder-coated steel LED table lamp, $350. *Blu Dot, 1953 N. Clybourn Ave., Lincoln Park*

QUICK TURN
ES17 wood corkscrew by Ettore Sottsass from Alessi, $130. *Bloomingdale’s, 900 N. Michigan Ave., Magnificent Mile*

SUN BOWL
MoMA Design Store wire mesh bowl, $50. *Nordstrom, 55 E. Grand Ave., Near North Side*

COOK’S CHOICE
Bertazzoni Professional Series 30-inch dual-fuel range, $6,549. *Abt Electronics, 1200 N. Milwaukee Ave., Glenview*

PHOTOGRAPHY: (CHAIR) DWR; (RANGE) ABT ELECTRONICS; (LAMP) BLU DOT; (BOWL) NORDSTROM; (CORKSCREW) ALESSI

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4.27.23

THEATER ON THE LAKE
CHICAGO | 6-10PM
$75

After 3 years of waiting, this celebration of the brewing and culinary arts is *back*! Featuring over 25 Chicago brewmasters and chefs serving up a night of FUNdraising, **Chicago On Tap** includes food, drinks, live music, raffle prizes, and a chance to vote for the Best Brew and Best Bite. **Purchase early bird tickets now and use discount code ChiMag to take $15 off!**

Proceeds benefit Meals on Wheels Chicago. www.mealsonwheelschicago.org

EXPERIENCE CHICAGO

The best things to see, do and experience this spring

Forecast Form

UPCOMING HAPPENINGS

*All events at MCA, 220 E. Chicago Ave.
Free admission for Illinois residents,
every Tuesday.*

Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today
Now through April 23

Duane Linklater: mymothersside
March 11—September 3

On Stage: Frictions
April 6—June 18
Performances in April and May

Family Day
March 11 | April 15 | May 13

Gary Simmons: Public Enemy
June 13—October 1

SPRING ARRIVES AT THE MCA

Spring is on its way to Chicago, which means that time is running out to see *Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. The exhibition envisions a new approach to contemporary art in the Caribbean diaspora, with the 1990s as its cultural backdrop. *Vogue* says, “What the exhibition does well is invite an open dialogue: [Curator Carla] Acevedo-Yates and the 37 artists cast light on the intricacies of the Caribbean in a way that is both imaginative and literal.” The exhibition closes on April 23.

Groundbreaking international art isn’t the only type of cultural experience you can have at the MCA—join us in April and May for our performance series *On Stage: Frictions*. This year’s theme explores the frictions that exist in a society shaped by race, featuring live and video-based performances by Will Rawls, Shamel Pitts | TRIBE, and Barak adé Soleil. The series are accompanied with an exhibition that allows visitors to experience elements of the performance anytime.

Recharge during your MCA visit with lunch, brunch, dinner, or just drinks at Marisol Restaurant and Bar, named after the artist Marisol—whose artwork donation started the MCA’s collection. The creative menu from chef Jason Hammel (also the chef and owner of Lula Cafe) is driven by seasonal and locally sourced ingredients. Like the exhibitions, the dishes change over frequently, so each visit feels like a new experience.

Complete your trip–or pop in for a quick gift–at the MCA Store. Named by the travel guide *Fodor’s* as one of the “World’s Best Museum Shops,” the MCA Store carries jewelry, design, and fashion from Chicago makers and designers, as well as products connected to the exhibitions or to the artists on view in the galleries. With something for every price point and taste, the MCA Store is the perfect place to shop off of Michigan Avenue.

MCA Family Day

REDEFINING ART AND CULTURE

Find out what's new in culture at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Visit for the latest from leading artists worldwide, genre-breaking performances, must-have items from Chicago designers at the MCA Store, and inspired culinary creations at Marisol Restaurant and Bar.

Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago

220 E Chicago Ave
Chicago, IL 60611
mcachicago.org

MCA
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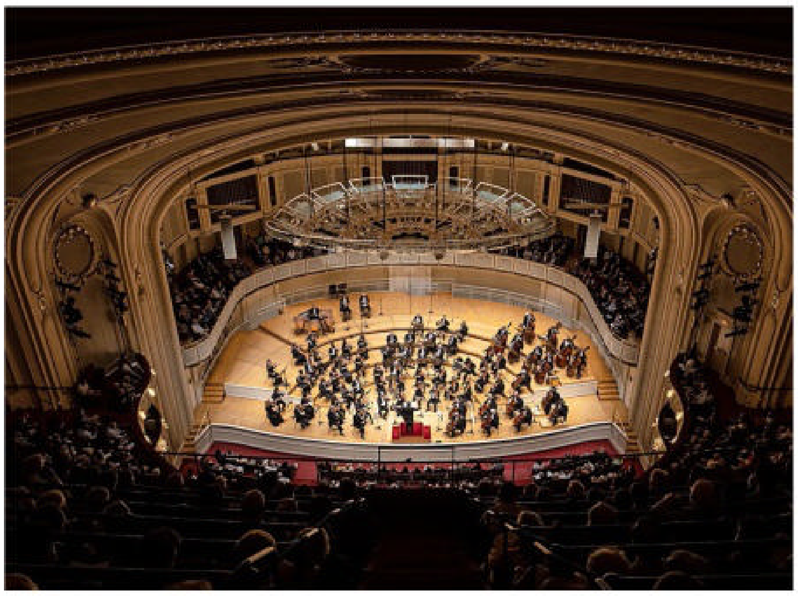
AGO

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



This March offers a variety of opportunities to experience the full power of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in programs spanning vibrant new works to symphonic classics.

Eminent Swedish American conductor Herbert Blomstedt leads two Dvořák landmarks — the restless, bucolic Eighth Symphony and the impassioned Cello Concerto. Joining the CSO is the young Romanian Andrei Ioniță, “one of the most exciting cellists to have emerged for a decade” (*The Times* of London).

Carmina burana, Carl Orff’s choral celebration of love, lust and youthful excess in medieval times, is as iconic as ever — at once gloriously bawdy and touchingly beautiful. On the same program is *Banner*, a rhapsody on “The Star-Spangled Banner” by CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Jessie Montgomery.

March 23-26, Thomas Wilkins conducts three works featuring unique musical visions of America, capped with Dvořák’s majestic “New World” Symphony, which draws on African American and Native American source materials.

Finally, Spanish guitarist Pablo Sáinz-Villegas and conductor Bernard Labadie make welcome returns to Symphony Center in a program featuring dark-hued symphonies by Mozart and Boccherini.

For information and tickets, visit **cso.org** or call **312-294-3000** for personalized assistance from Patron Services.

UPCOMING CONCERTS

OF THE CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

All programs at Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Ave.

Blomstedt Conducts Dvořák 8

Thursday, March 9, at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 11, at 8 p.m.
Sunday, March 12, at 3 p.m.

Carmina burana

Thursday, March 16, at 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 17, at 1:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 18, at 8 p.m.

Coleridge-Taylor, Copland & Dvořák 9

Thursday, March 23, at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 25, at 8 p.m.
Sunday, March 26, at 3 p.m.

Boccherini, Vivaldi & Mozart 40

Thursday, March 30, at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 1, at 8 p.m.
Tuesday, April 4, at 7:30 p.m.

MARCH AT SYMPHONY CENTER

Joshua Bell & Daniil Trifonov
MAR 2

Pink Martini featuring China Forbes
MAR 4

Kodo One Earth Tour 2023: Tsuzumi
MAR 5

Maria Schneider Orchestra: Data Lords
MAR 10

Hilary Hahn
MAR 19

Danilo Pérez’s Global Messengers and Children of the Light with John Patitucci & Brian Blade
MAR 31

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Funding for educational programs during the 2022/2023 SCP Jazz season has been generously provided by Dan J. Epstein, Judy Guitelman and the Dan J. Epstein Family Foundation.

Media Partners DOWNBEAT WBEZ91.5 WBBM

The Artist in Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is made possible through a generous gift from James and Brenda Grusecki.
Kodo One Earth Tour 2023: Tsuzumi is made possible with the generous support of William R. Jentes.

These programs are partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Artists, prices and programs subject to change.

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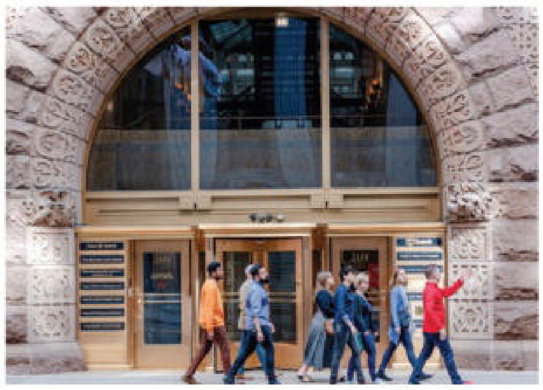

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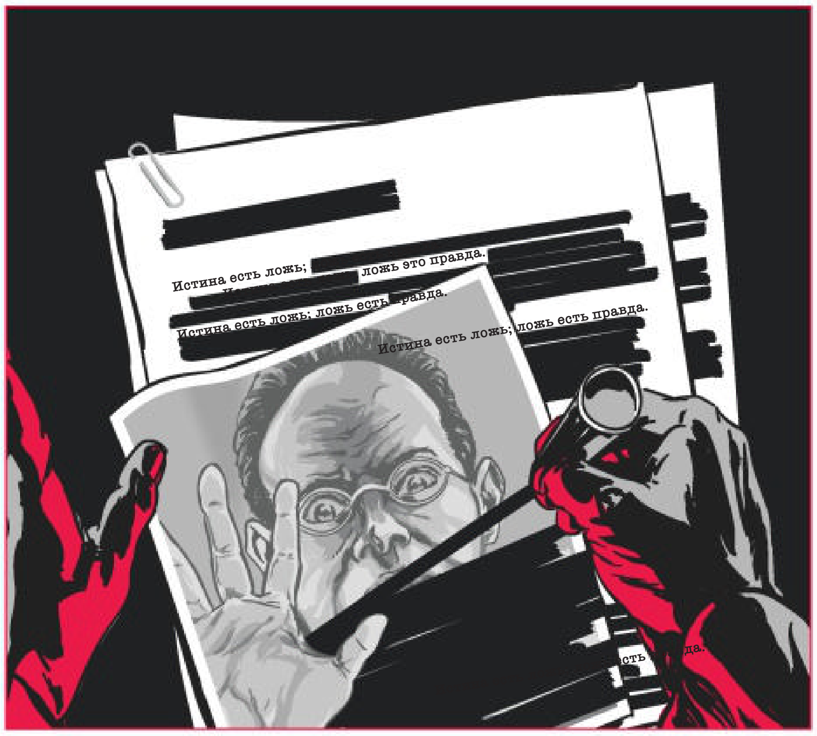
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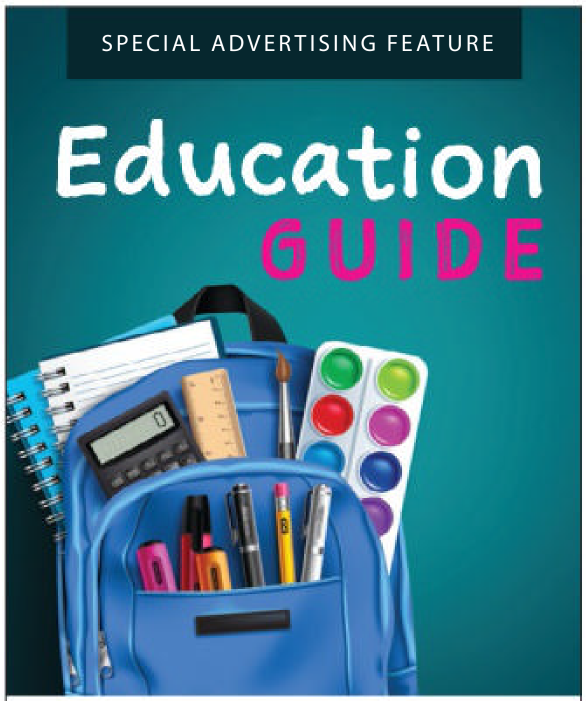

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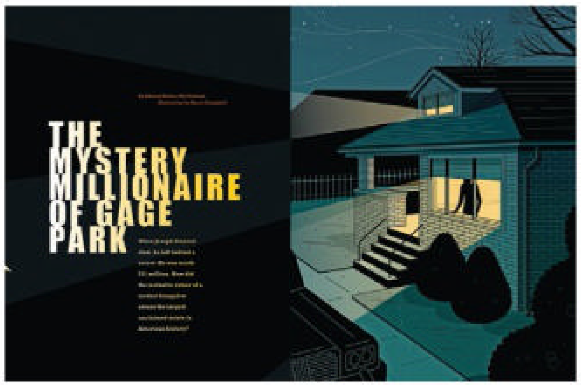

Mystery Millionaire

(Continued from page 63)

have wanted to spend the money on an estate attorney. “That would be consistent with the quote-unquote cheap mentality,” says Piercey.

Piercey has devoted more than 200 hours to the Stancak case, the most time-consuming of his 12-year career. Part of his job was contacting heirs, who were understandably skeptical about a stranger’s promise of free money. “Sometimes it’s like, ‘Is this legitimate?’” Piercey says. “‘How long is it gonna take?’ is probably the most common question I get.” But all’s well that ends well: “When they get their check, that’s when the skepticism ends.”

Early last year, after Linking Assets was satisfied it had identified all Stancak’s living first cousins, the company asked Richard Rehak, an heir who lives in Big Falls, Minnesota, to file a petition with the Probate Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County, asking to have Piercey named the administrator of the estate. (The request had to be made by a U.S. resident.) Rehak, a retired truck driver, was born on Chicago’s South Side but moved to Minnesota when he was 12. His mother was a Stancak, a daughter of Joe’s uncle Valentin, making him a first cousin once removed. “I better get a couple bucks before I kick the bucket,” says Rehak, who will turn 80 in May. Rehak remembers a few older family members, but not his long-lost cousin, who was 14 years his senior.

Last May, Piercey filed an affidavit of heirship, supported by 1,000 pages of genealogical material from White, outlining each heir’s relationship to Stancak. Once it was accepted, Piercey filed a claim with the treasurer’s office.

When Piercey took over the case, not even he was aware of how much money was involved. That did not become evident until last July, once all the keepers of his financial holdings had reported them. In October, once the state had collected and liquidated all Stancak’s assets, the treasurer’s office FedExed a check for $11,099,979.62 to Piercey & Associates. (One of Piercey’s assistants deposited the check at a local bank. The teller did not seem impressed – it’s Barrington, after all.)

At that point, Frerichs issued a press release announcing his office had “returned $11 million to the estate of a Chicago man who died of natural causes just before Christmas in 2016.” The National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators soon determined that it was the largest return of unclaimed property in the nation’s history. The story became international news. TV crews set up outside Stancak’s bungalow, now owned by a Latino family who bought it for $250,000 in 2019.

No one was more astonished than Jesse Guzman, who found out about his neighbor’s wealth from an online article. “I’m looking at it, I’m looking at the house. ‘That’s Joe,’” he recalls thinking. “I was speechless. I had no words. He could have been living in Hawaii.”

That would not have been Joe, though. “He was from the older generation,” Guzman concludes of Stancak, who was born mere weeks before the stock market crash that began the Great Depression. “That’s how the older generation thought. At some point, though, you gotta say, ‘I can live it up a little, fix my house.’”

Stancak’s heirs likely won’t see any of his money until this summer, at the earliest. Piercey still has to settle the estate’s tax obligations, then send letters to every heir, detailing how much money each will be receiving. The settlement must be approved by all heirs before any can get paid. Since many of the documents will need to be translated into Polish or other languages and mailed overseas, this case will drag out longer than most. So Anna Madeja isn’t getting excited quite yet. But once she cashes her check, she’ll have one word for the cousin she never met: *dziekuje*. In Polish, that means “thank you.” 🅲

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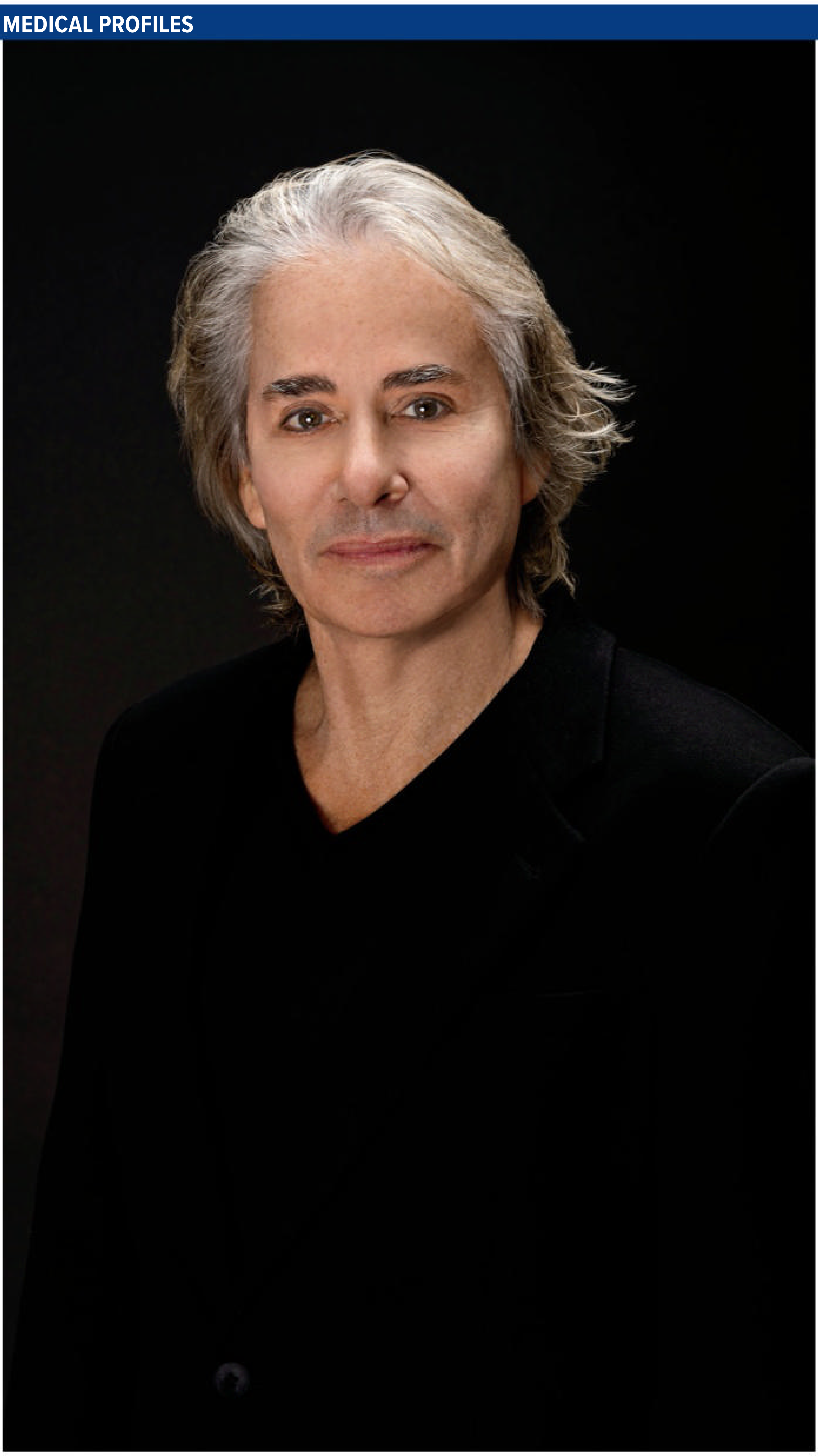

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Dr. Bloch combines an artistic sense with a technical, scientific background to create a natural and refined look for his patients. He believes that each of us has an inner sense of how we should look, and the art of plastic surgery is to listen to each patient’s desires and needs. It is important to separate reality from fantasy. After a consultation with the patient, a plan is outlined and costs are discussed. The next step is to transform these dreams, when appropriate, into reality.

Dr. Bloch does not believe that his role ends with surgery. He is actively involved in the post-operative phase and has a dedicated staff to assist patients with their needs, whether medical or emotional.

Additionally, he has a nationally recognized medical spa with state-of-the-art, spare-no-expense, cutting-edge technologies to treat the entire body. The latest technology being introduced to the Chicago area is UltraShape™ for non-invasive fat destruction. This really works and is painless. We guarantee it. Dr. Bloch supervises these treatments at Skin Deep Medical Spa, which has locations in Highland Park and Glenview.

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Dr. Epstein is a board-certified plastic surgeon specializing in facial rejuvenation, rhinoplasty, and breast enhancement surgery. He prides himself on producing beautiful and natural results. At the same time, he remains committed to delivering state-of-the-art procedures like his "scarless brow lift" or his minimally invasive neck lift using Renuvion® technology. Dr. Epstein is an active member of the Aesthetic Society, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, and the Rhinoplasty Society. He has also received praise for his generous work with organizations including Healing the Children and the Sue Duncan Children's Center.

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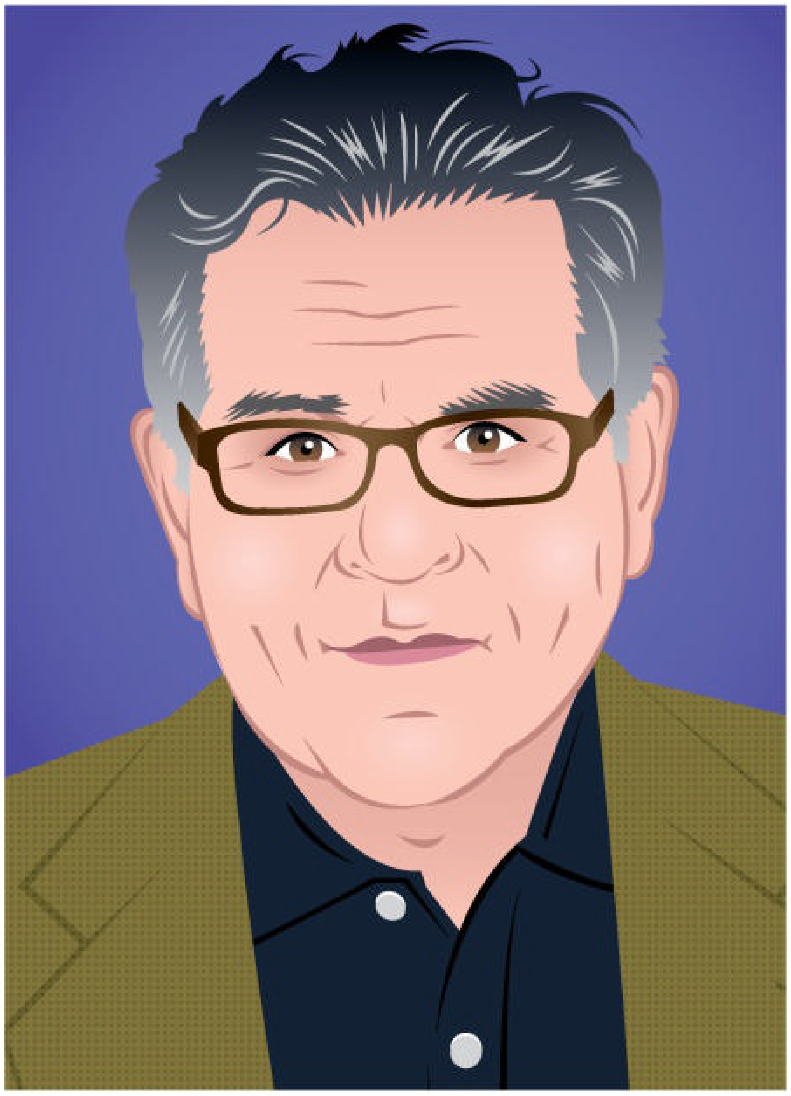

Tim Kazurinsky

The actor, 72, on how he found his funny bone, the wild *SNL* days, and why he reads obituaries

Interview by MIKE THOMAS

🟩 **I grew up in Australia with two alcoholic parents.** My mother was in and out of mental hospitals. She had her first nervous breakdown when I was 6. I spent an entire year in a Catholic orphanage. I had an ulcer at age 14 and a half. It was thought then that ulcers are caused by stress. Not at all. They're exacerbated by stress. I found out years later that they're caused by the *Helicobacter pylori*. It's a corkscrew-shaped bacteria from bad sanitation. We didn't have a flush toilet until I was 14. We were in government housing with two 40-gallon dunny cans.

🟩 **I worked with some very bright people at Leo Burnett:** Peter Seaman and Jeff Price. They were funny in pitch sessions, and I thought I could be funny, too. That's why I took classes with Jo Forsberg and then Del Close at Second City. In the workshops with Del, I could tap into my cleverness, my imagination. Second City offered me a job for an 80 percent pay cut, and I said, "I'd be crazy to pass up this opportunity." Those years were the most fun I had anywhere.

🟩 **John Belushi had seen a show** and took a shine to me. The one time I got him to do a set, he hadn't been back in probably three or four years. This was late '79. He had the No. 1 album, the No. 1 movie, and the No. 1 [late-night] TV show. You saw the Argentinians' reaction to the World Cup? That was that audience when he walked out onstage. Three hundred fifty people stood up in unison, they knocked drinks over. It was one of the weirdest experiences of my life.

🟩 **The only time I ever rented a limo** was to drive my mother from her hotel to *Saturday Night Live*. I'd flown her in from Australia. After, on that Sunday, we went for a walk through Central Park. We sat on a bench and people would go by like, "Hey, Tim Kazurinsky, thanks!" And my mother just started sobbing. I said, "What are you crying for?" And she said, "I've only heard our name yelled by bill collectors and people who come to repossess cars."

🟩 **One time I went into *SNL*** and literally everybody on the floor was whacked on coke. I just turned around and went home. I wasn't going to get anything done. Because for me it means they've all got diarrhea of the mouth and constipation of the brain. If I'd had one of those big Edward Don restaurant-supply mayonnaise jars and collected all the coke offered to me in those four years, I'd be a rich man.

🟩 **George Wendt called up** and said, "I'm going to Kansas City to the most successful dinner theater in America and doing *The Odd Couple*, and I want you to go." I said, "George, I haven't acted in years. I don't know." And he went, "Fuck you. I gotta play Oscar, and you know you're Felix, so let's just go. It's a good paycheck." And it was a blast. We went out every night after the show and ate barbecue. When we remounted *The Odd Couple* in Chicago, George had a heart attack in my car after the last rehearsal. And I'm like, It's from the fucking barbecue we ate in Kansas City. I've got two stents now.

🟩 **Everybody's got a story.** Everybody's got a life that's had its ups and downs, its perils, its disappointments. And I'm intrigued. It's why I read the *New York Times* obituary pages. What did this person do with their chance, with the X amount of heartbeats that they got? 🅲

Illustration by QUICKHONEY

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